

PLUCK AND LUCK

NOBODY'S SON, OR THE STRANGE FORTUNES OF A SMART BOY



AND OTHER STORIES

By Berton Bertrew



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NOBODY'S SON

OR, THE STRANGE FORTUNES OF A SMART BOY

By BERTON BERTREW

CHAPTER I.—An Adventure in Chinatown.

Everybody likes a smart boy if he is not too smart, so smart that is as to put himself in everybody's way and tread on everybody's toes, so to speak; even the gruffest old greybeard will show a certain deference to a smart boy. Mr. Jed Pixley, importer of everything importable, of No. — Maiden Lane, New York, was a very gruff old graybeard; a man who was never known to smile and who never had a pleasant word for anybody. George Porter, aged eighteen or nineteen or thereabouts, whose business it was to keep Mr. Pixley's office and many other offices in the "Lane" supplied with soap and clean towels—it was before the days of the towel supply companies—was most decidedly a smart boy. When George first began to come into Mr. Pixley's office in his bright bustling way, with a cheerful good-morning and a face full of energy and a step full of go, the old importer scarcely raised his head to look at him, and never responded by so much as a word; but as time went on he began to look at the boy, then to say good-morning in return until at last he actually cracked a joke with him one day, causing Miss Minnie Malloy, the pretty typewriter, to look up in amazement, while Harold Howland, the clerk, muttered beneath his breath: "Well, I'll be hanged!"

One pleasant morning in September, after George had been going into Pixley & Co.'s for about three months, the old importer surprised him by calling him into his private office and shutting the door.

"Young man, I want to have a talk with you," he said, gruffly. "Sit down."

George dropped into a chair considerably disturbed.

"I hope there is nothing wrong, sir. I've tried to do my best. If there's anything that ain't right I'll make it right, and—"

"Stop! You're wasting time," broke in the importer; "as far as supplying my office with soap and clean towels is concerned everything is all right. You've lived up to your contract—that's all I ask. Boy, what put that idea into your head?"

"What idea, sir?"

"The idea of going into this business of yours,

for I suppose it is a business. I don't imagine I'm the only man who patronizes you."

"I've got over forty offices on my list, sir. The idea was mine, I suppose."

"You suppose! Don't you know?"

"It was mine, sir. I was tired of looking for a job and I thought it would be a good thing."

"Humph! Smart! Who are you anyway?"

"George Porter is my name, sir."

"George Porter! What are you doing with that name? Whose son?"

George looked grave.

"I think I may say I'm nobody's son, sir," he replied. "I never knew my parents. I came out of the poorhouse. I couldn't tell you anything about myself."

"Well, I can tell you something about yourself, then," replied Mr. Pixley, in his snarling way; "you're a smart boy; you're going to give up soap peddling and are coming to work for me. My nephew, Harry Howland, has kicked over the traces and I've discharged him. You are going to take his place, and I'm going to give you fifteen dollars a week, which is big pay for a boy of your age. This is your first step up the ladder of Fortune, and you'll accept it—see?"

Now this was the way George came to be a clerk in the importing house of Jed Pixley & Co. It was a new experience for our hero, for we are bound to admit that he was without much education, and had been brought up with low surroundings—to which, by the way, he always showed himself superior—and was decidedly in the way to become nobody himself as well as being nobody's son.

"It will be the making of you, George," said Billy Pym, the ward detective, who had always been very friendly to the boy. "Old Pixley is a bachelor and as rich as mud, and they say he hasn't a relation in the world except Harry Howland, who is strictly N. G., and always was. You stick closely to the old duffer, George, and I wouldn't wonder if he wound up by dying and leaving you all his wealth."

So matters went on for a few short weeks, and George found himself giving good satisfaction, as far as he could judge, until one day a train of remarkable happenings began which certainly are without parallel in the history of ten thousand smart boys.

"Good-morning, Miss Minnie," said George, when he entered the store about eight o'clock on the morning in question. "I suppose Mr. Blaisdell hasn't come down yet?"

"Good-morning," replied the pretty typewriter, with a pleasant smile. "It's rather early for Mr. Blaisdell and for me, too, George. I came down to finish up yesterday's letters; there was such a lot of them that I couldn't get through."

Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling! The telephone bell began ringing just then. George hurried to the phone and got the following:

"Hello! Pixley & Co.?"

"Yes."

"That you, George?"

"Yes."

"I am Mr. Pixley."

Perhaps it was, but it was certainly not Mr. Pixley's voice—didn't sound like it at all. George noticed it then and thought of it afterward, but he lost his suspicion when the voice went on to ask:

"Has that box for Moy Jin Kee & Co. arrived?"

"Yes, sir."

"George!"

"Sir?"

"The contents of that box are of the highest value. I want you to go up to Mott street at once and notify those Chinamen to remove it right away. The number is forty-four and a half. You won't see any sign. Go in by the basement door and say that you are from Pixley's. They'll tell you where to find Moy Jin Kee."

"All right, sir."

"When will you go?"

"I'll go now, sir."

"All right. Good-by!"

Now it was this telephone message which sent George up into Chinatown that morning, and it may be also called the beginning of the adventures of our smart boy. Forty-four and a half Mott street was a ramshackle old brick dwelling, no different from twenty others on the block. Chinamen were sitting at the open windows, and Chinamen were going in and out the front door. There was a dirty display of vegetables for sale in the basement, where there were two doors, one opening into the vegetable shop and the other leading to the rear. George paused before the door and looked at it dubiously. He knew all about Chinatown, with its opium dens and fantan houses, and he didn't relish the errand a bit. Which door should he choose? It would not do to make a mistake. In a general way he knew that Mr. Pixley did considerable business with the New York Chinamen, and he had heard him say that in his younger days he had lived in China, but personally George had never been brought in contact with that branch of the business until now.

"Moy Jin Kee & Co?" he said, putting his head into the store. "Can you tell me where I can find them?"

The Chinaman behind the vegetable counter stared and shook his head. There was no information to be had there, and George tried the other door. Passing through a narrow passage he tapped at a door at the end, in which was a red paper sign, with three mysterious Chinese characters. There was a shuffling of feet behind the door, which was presently opened by an old Chinaman in a dirty blue blouse and straw slippers.

"I came from Pixley's. I want Moy Jin Kee & Co.," said George.

"Pixley! Ha! Come in!" called a voice inside.

George stepped into a dirty room where there was nothing but a table, a chair and a Chinaman, who was eating rice out of a bowl. He looked at George and grinned.

"Box come?" he asked, putting down the bowl.

"Yes."

"Ha! Good! Belly good! Where?"

"It's at the store. Mr. Pixley wants it removed at once."

"Boss!" called the Chinaman, "Oh, boss!"

Again there was a shuffling of feet, this time behind the partition at the end of the room, and a young man, half-dressed, red-eyed and sleepy looking stepped out. To his amazement George recognized Mr. Harold Howland, his predecessor.

"Hello!" he said. "So you've come, have you? I thought that call on the phone would catch you. A pen. Fung! Here, you just sign this order on old Blaisdell. My uncle is sick and won't be down to-day. I suppose you sign the delivery orders same as I used to. Put your name right here."

It was a part of George's business to sign these delivery orders, but always under the direction of Mr. Pixley, of course.

"What's all this?" he stammered. "Of course I don't sign any order for you, Mr. Howland, I—"

"You won't. You will!" cried young Howland, making a rush for him.

But George was too quick for this. With one well-directed blow between the eyes he sent Harold Howland sprawling. The Chinaman sprang up and tried to seize him as he made a break for the door.

"What's the matter?" asked a policeman stepping in front of him as he continued to run.

"Nothing," replied George, more scared now than he had been in the Chinaman's den; but the policeman did not press the matter further, and George hurried down Park Row, never daring to look behind him until he had reached the bridge, where he ran into Mr. Pixley just coming down the steps of the elevated road.

CHAPTER II.—The Double Robbery in the Lane.

"Humph! This is a pretty kettle of fish!" growled Mr. Pixley, when George, doing his best to keep up with the old gentleman's rapid stride down Nassau street, told what had occurred.

"The dirty scoundrel! The miserable opium fiend! To think that he is my dead sister's child! He knew it was coming and he thought to get it by that wretched trick, but you balked him, George. I always said you were a smart boy."

"What is it all about, sir?" asked George, as much in the dark as ever.

"About that box which came from China," replied Mr. Pixley, abruptly, and for some moments he walked along in grim silence, George not daring to speak again.

They crossed Fulton street and were just passing one of Nassau street's oldest buildings, when Mr. Pixley suddenly pointing up to it said: "Snooks!"

It was only one word and seemingly a meaning-

less one, but it made George turn very pale. It was easy to see that he was much moved.

"Wha—what did you say, sir?" he gasped.

"I said Snooks," repeated Mr. Pixley. "Did you ever go there?"

"Yes, sir. I——"

"Ever see him?"

"No, sir. Perhaps you——"

"No, I don't," snapped Mr. Pixley. "I thought so. We won't talk any more about it now. Don't you dare to bring up the subject again till I give you permission, but this much I'll say to you right now, George Porter, if that is really your name. If you continue to conduct yourself as you have done for the past few weeks, and to show the interest in my business that you have shown, it won't be a very long time before you are my partner, and the business will be yours when I'm dead."

To say that George was thunderstruck but half expresses the case. He was simply overwhelmed—crushed. Not another word did Mr. Pixley say, and when George tried to talk he shut him up in short order. They turned into Maiden Lane and were close to the store when suddenly George gave a shout and broke away on the run.

"Great Heavens!" gasped Mr. Pixley, clapping his hand to his heart and stopping short. He was excited, as he had good reason to be. So was George, but there was no stop to him. One of the boldest robberies ever perpetrated in broad daylight in the Lane—that's what it was. George saw Mr. Harold Howland and a second man come running out of the store and make for a business wagon which stood drawn up at the curb. In his hands Howland held an oblong box about four feet in length. He sprang into the wagon, the other following him and seizing the reins. Out of the store Minnie Malloy came running, and without an instant's hesitation seized the horse's head.

"Go for him, George! Go for him!" screamed Minnie, seeing our hero coming. "He's half killed Mr. Blaisdell, and stolen the box!"

Crack! Crack! came the whip cruelly about Minnie's head and shoulders, but the brave girl held her own while George, seizing Harold Howland by the leg, tried to drag him out of the wagon, box and all. Down came the young scamp on top of our hero, and all in an instant both were sprawling on the sidewalk, while the box tumbled into the gutter. Then instantly a hand without a thumb was projected under the wagon and seized it.

"Stop! Stop!" screamed Minnie, who had let go the horse's head. "Stop thief!"

It was Minnie alone of all interested who saw the shabby man straighten up with the box in his arms; saw him toss it into a wagon in which sat two Chinamen who held the reins whipped up his horse, and away went the wagon rattling up the Lane, closely followed by the other wagon, for Harry Howland had dealt poor George a knock out blow and was now making good his escape. George was just getting on his feet with Minnie's assistance, when Mr. Pixley clutched him by the arm with convulsive grip.

"Come inside," he whispered hoarsely. "Come inside. The police must know nothing of this."

He dragged George into the store, and Minnie locked the door against the crowd. He led the way into the private office and slammed the glass door. He seemed terribly excited in spite of his

outward calmness. His breath came in short gasps, his hand trembled violently, as he seated himself at the desk, seized a pen, and wrote as follows:

"Moy Jin Kee, 83 Mott street."

"That's the correct address, George," he said. "Get there at once and tell Moy what has happened. Say to him that I am not responsible. Will not be. Don't mention Harry's name. He has not got the box. I saw it all. Two Chinamen. The Gee Fo Company was on the wagon. Tell Moy that—oh! Again! Help, boy! I'm dying! Help!"

Help! It was too late to help Jed Pixley now! For years the old man had been afflicted with heart disease, and when he fell over in his chair it was never to rise again. Poor George, who sprang to his aid, saw to his horror that his employer was already dead. Dead? Yes. That is what the doctor said, who was hastily summoned. And in spite of his excitement, in spite of the genuine sorrow he felt at the sudden taking off of a man who, however eccentric, had certainly been good to him, George Porter could not fail to remember those startling words spoken on Nassau street but a few short moments before.

"And the business will be yours when I am dead."

CHAPTER III.—"What Does All This Mean?"

"I'd go now if I were you, George. Remember, it was his last orders. They should be obeyed."

Poor Minnie's eyes were red with weeping, and there were great welts across her pretty face, too, but they came from that cruel whip, and of this she had never complained. Nearly an hour had elapsed since Mr. Pixley's sudden death. The police were in charge of the store, the undertaker had already been there, and the coroner was due in half an hour, according to the message he had sent over the 'phone, but then it is a well-known fact that coroners are not over reliable; they come and go as they please.

"Is there any objection to my leaving the store for a little while?" George asked the policeman.

The policeman thought not, and George hurried out.

"It's the last thing he asked me to do, and it's only right that it should be done," he thought, brushing away a tear as he walked up the Lane, for he could not help feeling moved at the old man's sudden death. "Besides, it may be the means of getting that box into the hands of the rightful owner, and I know that would please him more than anything else."

George was somewhat cooled down when he reached the corner of Mott street and Chatham Square. He felt for the paper on which Mr. Pixley's last words had been written and to his disgust found it missing. He remembered then that he had left it on the desk.

"Let's see what was the number?" he thought, cudgeling his brains to bring back the recollection. "It won't do to make another mistake here. That don't do at all, but the number? Was it 82 or 83?"

He stood there by the saloon for a moment trying to think, and a dangerous spot it was, too, if his face was remembered by those who had seen him before in Mott street that morning, or had

witnessed his struggle with Harry Howland in the Lane. Even then sharp eyes were watching the boy over the top of the screen in the saloon window and they were not almond eyes either. No; they belonged to no Chinaman but were, on the contrary, the special property of a tall, slim white man, very shabbily dressed. Could Minnie have seen his right hand she would have instantly recognized it. There was no thumb. Was it the hand which had dragged the box out of the gutter down in Maiden Lane?

"Say, young feller, was you looking for anybody in particular? I'm acquainted with all the Chinks. If you're after one of 'em I'll give you the steer for a dollar and you can throw in the drinks."

The stranger had stolen out of the saloon and came up behind George with his right hand in his pocket.

"I was looking for a Chink named Moy Jin Kee who lives somewhere around here," said George, carelessly. "It don't make much difference to me whether I find him or not though. If I was to give you a dollar the boss wouldn't make it good to me."

"How about standing for the drinks? I know just where Moy Jin Kee lives."

"I ain't standing anything. I can find the place myself," said George, and he hurried on up Mott street, for he did not relish the way in which the man looked at him, and felt sorry that he had been drawn into talking to him at all.

He kept on to 83 and stopped, looking around then for the first time. To his disgust there was the man close beside him again.

"It ain't there, young feller; it's across the street, 82," he said, confidentially. "Say, you might stand the drinks."

George slipped a quarter into the fellow's hand and hurried across the street, anxious to be rid of him on any terms. He thought it was 82 himself. He had made up his mind to that before the man spoke. As he ascended the steps and passed in by the open door, the shabby man gave a fiendish chuckle.

"That's a good job," he muttered. "That's all right. I'll make the Chinks stand another ten on that. I—good heavens, Minnie! You here!"

A girl had suddenly come up beside him, and seized his arm with convulsive grip. It was Minnie Malloy. She had come around the corner of Pell street, her thin, well-dressed figure and pretty face looking sadly out of place here.

"Ed!" she whispered. "Oh, Ed! How could you do it? Do you know you've killed the boss?"

"Lemme go, sis," growled the shabby man.

"What are you doing here?"

"Hush! Don't you dare! I'm going to Moy Jin Kee's to tell them the truth."

"What?"

"Oh, yes, I'm here!" hissed the girl, "and you can't stop me. Our head clerk has just gone in there, and I'm going, too. Follow me, if you dare, Ed! I warn you! I'll—well, no matter? You know!"

These words were spoken in low, meaning tones, and having said them, Minnie shot across the street and ran up the steps of 82. Meanwhile George, little dreaming that Minnie Malloy had followed him up so closely, walked boldly into 82 Mott street. There was no Chinaman lounging about the hall, but one looked out of the inner

door almost as soon as George entered at the front.

"Who want?" he asked, eyeing the boy steadily; it looked as though he must have seen him coming up the steps.

"Moy Jin Kee live here?" asked George.

"Yeh. Come in."

George stepped into the room, which was quite elaborately furnished after the Chinese style, and was evidently the abode of some Mongolian with plenty of money to spend.

"Want Moy Jin Kee? Sit down," said the Chinaman, motioning George to a chair.

"That your name?" asked the boy, still standing.

"Yeh. What want?"

"You know Pixley & Co., down in Maiden Lane?"

"Oh, yeh. What want?"

"Mr. Pixley told me to come to you and tell you about the box that came from China last night," began George, and he went on to tell his story, using the simplest language possible. Whether the Chinaman understood or not it was impossible to tell, for he never opened his lips, and the expression of his face did not change.

"Mr. Pixley dead, eh?" he said, when George finished. "Belly good man. Me solly. Boy, what your name?"

"My name is George Porter."

"George Porter—George Porterfield?" said the Chinaman, with a grin.

George started.

"What do you know about that?" he gasped.

The Chinaman chuckled.

"Good-by, George Porterfield," he said. "Come and see us again," and pushing aside a curtain which concealed the doorway of the adjoining room, he disappeared. What George thought we cannot stop to explain now, for all in the same instant he was suddenly seized from behind by four strong hands, and pushed on through the curtain. Two Chinamen had him hard and fast, and there were at least ten more in the room beyond, which was entirely bare of furniture. In fact, there was nothing in it at all, except the Chinaman and the identical oblong case which had been dragged out of the gutter down in Maiden Lane. There it lay on the floor unopened, and looking just as George had seen it in the store-room of Pixley & Co.

"Dis is de boy," said George's Chinaman. "Dis is George Porterfield," but George was dumb. He was too badly frightened to speak.

An old Chinaman wearing great horn spectacles now stepped forward and addressed him in perfect English.

"Are you George Porterfield?" he asked.

"That's my name," replied George, feeling about as uncomfortable as it was possible for a boy to feel.

"Where is your father?"

"If I was to try to tell you who my father was I should have to lie. I'm nobody's son. I never knew my father. I don't even know that I have any right to the name you have given me, though it is certainly true."

"You lie," said the old man quietly. "No matter. Later we shall see."

Then he said something in Chinese, and one of the men stepping into the other room came back presently with a hammer and cold chisel, and im-

mediately began opening the box which was very securely nailed and in addition was fastened around with iron bands. It took time to get the cover off, and while these operations were going on, the Chinamen all showed the greatest excitement. When at last it came up a chorus of enraged cries rang out through the room. The box was filled with stones! Instantly knives were drawn and there was a rush for George; there was plenty said, but what it was he could not tell, for besides the fact that he did not understand Chinese, George had all he could do to save his life. He sprang through the curtain, knocking out two Chinamen as he leaped back. Wrenching open the door, he slammed it in the faces of the others and ran for his life through the hall, now dark, for the front door had been closed. There was a door at this end of the hall, and George flung it open. To his horror he saw that this was not the street, but only a flight of steps leading down into a dark basement. Slamming the door, George dashed downstairs, but before he had half reached the bottom the deep baying of a dog was heard and a huge bloodhound came rushing up the steps.

"Stand where you are, George Porterfield!" called the voice of the old Chinaman behind him. "One step further and you die!"

CHAPTER IV.—All About Snooks.

For our young friend, George Porter, the situation had now become decidedly interesting, not to say dangerous. Up the stairs the bloodhound was springing, through the passage the enraged Chinamen were running, threatening the boy's life, and if George had been anythin less than the cool-headed young New Yorker that he was, the chances would have been decidedly against him. This is what he did: Waited one awful instant there on the stairs for the dog to make his final spring, and then catching him by the throat with his left hand, drove the big jack-knife which he had hastily drawn into the brute's head with his right.

With a dying howl of agony the bloodhound fell backward down the stairs, helped on by a smart kick from George's foot. Now there is one boy in a thousand who would have the presence of mind to do this, or having it, could do it. Decidedly not; but George Porter did it! He was as quick as a flash, and up to date in all his methods. He laid for that bloodhound and got him, and got himself downstairs, too. The Chinamen were coming; he could hear them on the stairs rushing after him, and when he struck the dark passage George sprang over the writhing body of the dying hound and ran on toward the light which now suddenly made itself visible at the further end.

"George! George! Come in here, George!" called a voice beyond the open door.

Probably there wasn't a more surprised boy in Chinatown just then than our hero, for the voice was Minnie Malloy's, and there stood Minnie herself in the doorway beckoning, with a Chinaman behind her.

"Come! Come!" she called. "Don't lose an instant. There you are! All safe now, thank God!"

As George sprang through the door the China-

man slammed it shut, and hastily put up an iron bar.

"What in the world brought you here, Minnie?" he gasped at last.

"Came to see that you didn't get into trouble, George. I think you must admit that I was needed. You never could have escaped if I hadn't let you in here."

"Minnie!"

"Oh, I know what you are going to say: this is no place for me. Wait a minute. My sister was married to a Chinaman, George; she is dead now, poor soul. This is my brother-in-law, Moy Jim Kee."

Here was a disclosure scarcely to be expected. The Chinaman shook hands with George and smiled.

"It's all right," he said in perfect English. "You are safe now. It's all right about the box, too. The one they opened upstairs was filled with stones, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

The Chinaman seemed to think it all a joke, for he laughed heartily, and patting George on the back called him a smart boy.

"Come, let's get out of here," Minnie said. "Good-by, Moy. I'll let you know when the box comes."

"Good-by, sister," said the Chinaman. "Good-by, George. Smart boy!"

He patted George on the back again, and led the way through the grocery store in the basement out onto Mott Street, saying something in Chinese to the storekeeper as they passed. They parted at the door, Minnie and George going down to Chatham Square in silence.

"What does all this mean, Minnie?" demanded George, as they walked down Park Row. "I'm so puzzled that—"

"Now stop, George," interrupted Minnie, laying her hand on his arm. "I want you to understand my part in this business. First, I know no more about the box than you do. Second, Moy Jin Kee is actually my brother-in-law, and he's a good man. Of course I didn't want everybody to know that I had a Chinese brother-in-law, so I never said anything about it at the store, but when I found you were likely to get into trouble in Chinatown, I thought I ought to look after you a bit, and I did it—that's all! Now I'm going home, and you'll see me at the store in the morning. I suppose we'll both be out of a job now, for I won't work for Harry Howland, and I don't suppose you will, either. Good-by, George. Hope for the best. Stop that Third Avenue car for me, please. Thank you. Good-by."

"What an up-and-down little thing she is," thought George, as the car whirled Minnie away. "Well, well, this makes the mystery more mysterious than ever, but I ain't going to bother my head about it till I have to. I've got my own mystery to attend to. I'll bet she won't work for Harry Howland. Perhaps she'll find herself working for me."

Having expressed these sentiments, George walked down Park Row to Nassau Street, and down Nassau Street to the old building between Fulton and John in front of which Mr. Jed Pixley had made those mysterious remarks just before his death.

"Snooks," was the word with which Mr. Pixley began his remarks, and Snooks was the name on the sign board, opposite room thirty-three.

George ran up the dark stairs and going straight to the number found that Snooks was the name on the door, and the battered sign added the information that Mr. Snooks was an attorney and counsellor at law. George opened the door and walked into the office. It was a shabby old room with a display of dusty law-books on the shelves. A little old man with a brown wig was writing at a desk, who looked up as George entered. There was an inner door behind him connecting with another office, but this was closed.

"Well," growled the man with the wig, "are you here again?"

"Yes, I am," replied George. "Can I see Mr. Snooks?"

"No, you can't."

"Is he in?"

"No, he ain't."

"Can't you tell me when he will be in?"

"No."

"I'll wait if you think it is worth while."

"Why don't you write to him?" asked the man with the wig.

"Would he answer the letter?"

"Probably he would. Can't say."

"What does he say when you tell him I have called?"

"Says he'll see you when he gets ready."

Suddenly the door of the inner office opened, and another little old man with another brown wig looked out.

"I'm ready now," he said. "Come in, George Porter."

George's heart was in his throat, so to speak, when he passed through that office door. Mr. Snooks motioned to a chair on one side of the desk and dropped in one on the other side himself, but George preferred to stand.

"I called to see you, sir, because——" he began.

"Stop!" interrupted the lawyer, "my time is limited. You have opened the locket? Is that it?"

"You seem to know, sir," stammered George.

"I do. This is the case. You, George Porter, are an orphan; a waif; you know nothing of your parentage; since your earliest recollection you have been knocking about New York; as far back as you can remember you lived with an old woman named Bridget Connors in one place and another. Am I right or wrong?"

"You are right, but I don't see how you can possibly know anything about me."

"Humph! Don't, eh? I know. When the old woman died she gave you a locket—a gold locket—curiously engraved; you couldn't open the locket, but because Bridget told you to always keep it, you kept it and one day you opened it and found a paper folded up inside. Am I right or wrong?"

"Right," said George, more and more amazed.

"Humph! I knew! On this paper was written 'See Snooks,' and my address followed, that was all. You tried to see Snooks, and at last you have succeeded. Am I right or wrong?"

"Right, of course. If you'll please explain, sir, I——"

"Stop, George Porter! There's something for you to explain first."

Mr. Snooks took up the afternoon paper, and pointing to an article which occupied half the front page, handed it to George. It was an account of the affair in Maiden Lane. With many

exaggerations and inaccuracies the story of the stolen box and Mr. Pixley's sudden death was told. Of course, George came in for his share of mention. Having read the article, he handed the paper back to the lawyer.

"That's partly true and partly false," he said.

"Partly true and partly false. Just so," replied Snooks. "Is it true that you are the George Porter mentioned here?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long have you been working for Mr. Pixley?"

George named the time.

"Strange! Very strange!" muttered the lawyer; then he added aloud: "Well, good-day. Later I'll see you again, later on."

Whereupon Mr. Snooks opened the office door, and George walked out.

CHAPTER V.—George Jumps into a Fortune.

For one week exactly the store of Jed Pixley & Co. remained closed. This was by the order of Lawyer Lamb, of Lamb, Bassott & Lamb, the late Mr. Pixley's attorneys. George worked inside the closed doors straightening things, however, and Mr. Blaisdell and Minnie Malloy were there too, and usually Mr. Lamb was in evidence more or less during the day. The vault was opened, boxes upon boxes of papers were ransacked, the lawyer making a vast number of notes as he worked over them. He seldom spoke to George. At the outset he instructed him to get everything up to date, and George did it to the best of his ability.

Twice Harry Howland put in an appearance, but George would hold no conversation with him, nor would Minnie or Mr. Blaisdell. They respected their dead employer's wishes, and never breathed the young man's name in connection with the robbery of the box. As for Lawyer Lamb he simply waved young Howland off when he tried to address him, saying that he had "no time to talk." Meanwhile, the funeral took place and Mr. Pixley was buried in Greenwood Cemetery. Relations turned up and many merchants attended, so the affair was rather an extensive one. George saw Harry Howland among the mourners, but did not speak to him then. At the grave, after all was over, Howland came up behind him just as he was turning away.

"Say, George Porter, you'd better be looking out for another job," he said sneeringly. "We shan't want you after the end of next week."

"If you are the boss of the business I shall certainly resign."

"You'd better. It's either that or be kicked out."

"Perhaps someone else may do the kicking."

"What do you mean, you young upstart? Do you think there's any doubt that I'll throw you out of the store, neck and crop, the moment I come into my own?"

George bit his lips and turned away. He did not want to have any trouble right there over Mr. Pixley's grave.

But when Mr. Pixley's will was opened and read to the assembled relatives, three days later, it was found that Harry Howland's name was not even mentioned. The vast estate of the old merchant was divided between various charities, but

the business was left unconditionally to George Porterfield, of New York City. This legacy—and it was a great one—was without comments or explanation. Who was George Porterfield? Nobody knew. Next day Jed Pixley & Co. opened for business, and at precisely nine o'clock Harry Howland walked into the store, took off his coat and hung his hat on the rack. Old Blaisdell stared. So did George and Minnie.

"This ends my chances," thought George, for he suspected that the will had been read, and at once jumped at the conclusion that Harry Howland was the heir.

There was a smile of evil triumph on Howland's face as he walked into the counting-room.

"Good-morning, Mr. Blaisdell," he said, "I'm back again you see."

"I see you are," replied the old book-keeper. "Have you come to stay?"

"Certainly I have. I'm going to take right hold."

George, who was writing a letter at Mr. Pixley's desk, never raised his eyes from the paper.

"My time has evidently come," he thought, "but all the same I won't give up till the last gasp."

But Minnie Malloy handled herself in no such judicious way. She got right up, and closing her typewriting machine, began to put on her hat.

"Well, Minnie, what's the matter with you? Where are you going?" asked Howland. "I shall want you here right along."

"You may want, but you won't keep me," replied Minnie tartly. "If you are boss here I'm going to leave."

"Oh, no. Don't do that. Don't think of it. There'll be no changes in the office except so far as that young snoozer is concerned. Porter, we don't want you. Mr. Blaisdell will make up your account and you can call for your money the last of the week. Get out."

Here was the end of it all then. George rose and prepared to go.

"I suppose you've inherited the business?" he said quietly. "I take it that's what you mean."

"Of course I have—"

"Nct," spoke Lawyer Lamb, entering at that moment. "Don't make any false statements, Howland. The surrogate has appointed you manager, pending the search for George Porterfield. He is the heir—name very much like yours, Porter. We've advertised for him, and should he turn up, the business of Jed Pixley & Co. is his."

George stared. The hot blood was all in his face—his head reeled.

"Now, come, Mr. Lamb, this fellow can't work under me, and that's all there is about it," said Howland. "He's nobody, and don't understand the business. I want him to go."

"Of course, you've got the power to discharge him," replied Lawyer Lamb, preparing to go to work on the papers relating to the estate. "It's none of my business."

"Then I'm to go?" asked George.

"Yes; I've nothing to do with the matter. Mr. Howland is in command here."

"Suppose George Porterfield was to turn up, would he be in command?"

"When he had proved his claim—yes, certainly."

"I am George Porterfield."

"You—you!" cried Lawyer Lamb, amazed.

"He lies! He's crazy!" Harry Howland cried. At the same instant the office door opened, and in walked a little old man, with a brown wig showing plainly under his tall hat.

"Snooks? How are you?" cried Lawyer Lamb. "I haven't seen you in years."

"Pardon me, Mr. Lamb, my health is of little consequence. Through your window here I happened to catch certain remarks. That young man neither lies nor is he crazy. He is George Porterfield, and I can prove it."

Bang! went Lawyer Lamb's chair upon the floor, he sprang up in such haste.

"But the locket—the will requires—"

"That a certain locket bearing the initials G. P. should be produced. Exactly. Young man, I think you can come to my assistance here."

"Here is the locket, sir," replied George, taking out a small box and handing it over to Lawyer Lamb, who hurried to open it, finding inside just such a locket as Mr. Snooks had described.

"I'll be hanged if it ain't!" he exclaimed. "Young man, when did you get this?"

"He refers you to his lawyer, and that's me," said Snooks, before George could answer. "Mr. Howland, I think we shan't need you any more."

Clapping on his hat, Howland flung himself angrily out of the store.

"I'm going now, but I'll be back here again as boss," he said as he passed out of the door. "This big business don't go to Nobody's Son!"

CHAPTER VI.—Burglars in the Store.

It is one thing for a boy, scarcely out of his teens, to find himself suddenly placed in possession of a great commercial business, and another for him to be able to run it. George Porterfield, our hero, did both. The winter passed and spring came to find him still pegging away at the business—all his own now; the surrogate had so decided. As George was on his way to the store one morning, after stopping into one or two stores to attend to business, he ran into his old friend, Billy Pym, the ward detective.

"Hello, George!" exclaimed Billy. "By Jove, you are the very fellow I want to see."

"Well, I'm right here. Look at me!" laughed our smart boy.

"I am looking at you, and I'm proud to do it. Nothing stuck up about you. They tell me you've come into old Pixley's business. Didn't I say so? You remember, George."

"Well, you did; but it's rather late in the day to congratulate me. That happened three months ago."

"Better late than never. However, that ain't what I want to see you for. Say, George, you've got enemies—do you know that?"

"Shouldn't wonder, but I don't know it."

"I do, then. You want to look sharp; there's going to be trouble down at the store."

"What do you mean, Billy; speak out!"

"You be on hand at midnight. I'll tell you. Be in the store I mean; but shut up tight; don't have any light burning, or the whole snap will be given away."

"Very good. I'll be on hand. I think you are my friend, Billy; you always were."

Then they parted and George went back to the

store a good deal disturbed, for if there was one whom he trusted more than another, that man was Billy Pym, who, by the way, in spite of his position on the force, was not much older than George himself. The business of the day was successfully finished, and George escorted Minnie to the elevated station as he often did of an evening, for he and Minnie were fast friends always, and they had many things to discuss about the business of the day. Leaving Minnie at the station, George sauntered up Broadway, dined at a well-known restaurant and took in the theatre. After the play was over George walked down Broadway with his rapid, swinging gait, never stopping until he reached the store. It was now quarter before twelve, almost the appointed time. He let himself in with his key, seeing nothing of Billy Pym, and was just about to strike a light when he remembered the detective's warning against it.

"Guess I'd better get outside and wait for him," he thought, "but if I do I shall only attract attention, and there might be a new cop on the beat. I'll lie down on the lounge in the back office. Of course Billy will knock when he comes, and I shall hear him all right enough."

Perhaps there might have been some chance of his hearing the detective's knock when it came, if George had not dropped off asleep there in the dark store inside of fifteen minutes, for that was just what he did, and it may as well be understood that no one but a boy with a clear conscience could go to sleep under such circumstances as these. George did it, though, and when he awoke it was with a start—he thought he heard someone trying the door. He pulled himself up, and was still more startled to perceive that there was a light in the outer office near the big safe; he could hear whispering voices also; something decidedly out of order seemed to be going on. Burglars? Why, of course! George looked through the glass partition and saw them. They had hung a big rubber cloth over the window, and while two of them were spreading out an array of burglar's tools upon the floor, the third held a dark lantern for them to see to work by. All were masked and wore slouch hats and had their overcoat collars turned up under their chins.

"Thunder! They are going to spoil my safe if I don't put a stop to this," thought George; he tiptoed back to Mr. Pixley's desk and took out a revolver, which the old man always kept in the upper right hand drawer.

The instant George heard the first click of the drill he flung open the door between the two offices, covering the man with the lantern.

"Throw up your hands, you fellows!" cried the brave boy in a clear, ringing voice. "Up hands, or there'll be a dead man in the house in just two shakes!"

Crash! went the drill upon the floor. The man with the lantern started back in terror.

"Slug him, Petey!" he gasped. "That's the boy!"

He flung the lighted lantern at George's head as he spoke and made a rush for him, while "Petey" sprang up from the floor.

as it went, and, as luck would have it, taking "Petey" in the leg.

"Oh, oh! I'm shot!" groaned "Petey," kneeling over; the excitement gave George his chance. He got in a knock-out blow under the lantern-man's chin just as that enterprising individual was about to close on his throat. Over he tumbled on top of Petey; off went his mask, and Harry Howland was revealed. All this took but a moment, and in that moment the man "Ed" flung open the outer door and ran for his life. Hurried footsteps were heard coming down the lane. There was a rapping of a policeman's club on the sidewalk. Cool and collected George stood there, with Harry Howland and Petey covered with the revolver which he lost no time in regaining; he thought fast and decided what to do.

"If I try to hold them Howland is disgraced forever," flashed across him. "Would Mr. Pixley want that? No; I'll remember my promise and let them go."

"Don't shoot, George! Don't shoot!" Harry was whining. "Spare my life and I'll tell you something you don't know."

"Go," George said. "Get out of this, blame quick! Go now!"

They scrambled up, shot out of the store, and ran for their lives. No one would have supposed that Petey was very badly wounded from the way he got over the ground, and probably he was not. The instant they were gone George lit the gas and started to close the door, when Billy Pym came rushing in.

"Great Heavens! am I too late?" he exclaimed. "George—are you hurt? Oh, I could club myself for this!"

George kept perfectly cool.

"I'm all right, Billy," he replied. "There has been burglars here, and I don't want anything done about it. Hope no cop is chasing them. If there is, I want you to stop it right now."

"No, no! There's nobody around to do any chasing. I saw them run, and perhaps might have shot one of them, but could never have caught them. Besides, I was too anxious to know how it fared with you."

"Shut the door, and I'll tell you all about it," said George. "I want you to understand that nothing must be done about this. I have my reasons, and—"

"And you know who the burglars are," said Billy, "and what is more you make a mistake in not telling—remember now what I say!"

George told Billy the whole story with many questions and interruptions on the part of the detective.

"Huh! I know where I could put my hand on one of those fellows, and I'll bet on it," Billy said emphatically, "but I suppose I must do as you say."

"Decidedly. Now, then, what did you want to see me about? I'm in a lot of burglar's tools, which you can have, and there's a little hole in the safe which don't do any harm; let the whole business drop and tell me whatever you've got to tell."

"Simply that I've been shadowing Harry Howland for the past two weeks, and heard him plotting a burglary here with a crook who hangs around Chinatown. Four-fingered Ed is the name he goes by; his real name is Ed Malloy."

"That's enough. Billy, I want you to keep right

CHAPTER VII.—A Little Deal in Indigo.

The flying lantern knocked the revolver out of George's hand, and it fell to the floor exploding

on shadowing Harry Howland; if you catch on to anything I ought to know let me hear it, and I'll pay you well."

Soon after this they left the store, Billy, seeing George safe to the modest boarding-house where he was living at the time. Next day the lock on the front door was changed, so that Harry Howland could not use his old pass-key again, as he undoubtedly did. Then after several days George began to feel secure, but he was wondering all the time what it was that Harry expected to get out of the safe. It could not have been money. None was ever kept there. As for Mr. Pixley's private papers, Lawyer Lamb had all but those which directly related to the business. It remained a mystery, and soon George stopped thinking about it, for a big business transaction came up in which he had an opportunity to show the commercial world just what sort of a fellow he was. It was a matter of indigo. There was a scarcity in the market. George, who studied the commercial reports daily, discovered this one morning.

"Indigo is going up, Minnie," he said to his typewriter, "and it's a lucky thing for us, for we've got a cargo to arrive within a week."

"How much difference will the rise make to us, Mr. Porterfield?" asked Minnie, who was busy oiling her typewriter for the day's work.

"If you call me anything but George, I shall discharge you, Minnie. I want you to understand that good fortune hasn't changed me a bit. How much difference will it make? Why, a rise of two cents a pound will make at least five thousand dollars extra profit on our consignment. We get ten per cent. on this, that means five hundred dollars. Worth having, ain't it?"

It certainly was; but the next day indigo was up four cents and that meant one thousand dollars. George began to look forward to a good thing in a small way and he began to wonder if he couldn't make still more out of the indigo market. He thought he could. Keeping his own counsel he quietly sent for two well known brokers in dye stuffs, receiving them separately; to each he gave instructions to go on the market and offer indigo to arrive at two cents below the market rate. The brokers worked all day, and when they reported they announced that the entire cargo and some over had been placed.

"You're making a big mistake, Mr. Porterfield," said Broker Sandford. "I could easily have got an advance of one cent over the price you named."

"You did just what I told you to do, didn't you?" asked George.

"Certainly."

"Well, here's a check for your commission. Do you know how much indigo there is on the market now exclusive of mine?"

Mr. Sandford named the amount. It was by no means large.

"Call day after tomorrow for your instructions, for I shall want you again," said George quietly, and to the other broker his instructions were the same.

Next day the market reports announced a drop of three cents in indigo; the day following it was down four cents. There was some offered, but none taken—George had loaded everybody up. That night George found himself master of the indigo market. He not only had all the original surplus, but nearly all that he had sold to arrive, and as Sandford and his associates had main-

tained profound secrecy, no one ever dreamed who was at the bottom of the affair. The end was most flattering. One week later the Denby Castle arrived from Rangoon, loaded with indigo for Jed Pixley & Co. Meanwhile, the dyers, unable to get the stuff, had run the price up six cents a pound above the quotation on which George began to operate. All day long brokers and principals were coming into the store in search of indigo. George held for the market price and got it.

CHAPTER VIII.—The One-Eyed Man.

A few nights later George was sauntering up Broadway as usual. It gave him time for thought, and he greatly enjoyed the peaceful evening calm of that busy street. There was a man walking ahead of George—had been for several blocks. Every now and then he would turn and stare at him, and he was doing it again now. It began to make our hero feel decidedly disagreeable. One peculiarity of this man was marked. He had a glass eye which made it necessary for him to turn his head around in a most uncomfortable fashion, in order to get a good look at the boy. George felt just in the mood for an adventure, and the notion struck him to follow the man, and see how long this sort of thing would last.

He had another reason, too. This was not the first time the one-eyed man had stared at him on Broadway. It had been going on for a week past. Every night he ran into this same strange character. He began to wonder what it meant. The general appearance of the man showed him to be a foreigner. He might have been a Spaniard or a Portuguese or a Cuban. There was also something about his flat nose and thick lips which made him look like a Chinaman. After a moment's reflection George determined to take the bull by the horns and boldly address the man, little dreaming that this conclusion was to lead to the beginning of a train of strange adventures, which in the end was to solve the problem whether or not he was "Nobody's Son."

Quickening his steps, George tried to come up with the stranger. This was not so easy. The man heard him coming, and shot ahead at a rapid pace. Repeatedly he looked back at George, twisting his head around to bring his perfect optic in position, but he made no other sign that he was aware of being followed. So they kept on until they reached Eighth Street, when the one-eyed man whipped around the corner and was gone.

"I've lost him, and that will be the end of it," thought George, but it wasn't so at all, for when he turned the corner, there was the one-eyed man standing in front of an old-fashioned dwelling, one of the last of its kind on Eighth Street. He had one foot on the marble steps, and seemed to hesitate about ascending. His one eye was fixed on George as soon as the boy turned the corner, and now he raised his hand and beckoned for our hero to approach. Filled with curiosity, George quickened his steps.

"George Porterfield," said the man in a low, thrilling voice. "George Porterfield, that's your name."

"What was the matter with George? As the stranger fixed his single optic on his face a

strange thrill seemed to shoot through him from head to foot. It seemed to George then that if the one-eyed man were to tell him to come right into the house he would have done it despite of any danger. But the man did nothing of the sort.

"Look up at the window," he said in a low voice. "Judge then whether it is safe to follow me into this place or not. I leave it entirely to you."

Having said this, the one-eyed man bounded up the steps and shot through the door, which noiselessly opened to receive him. George raised his eyes to the windows, of course. They were all closed and the inside blinds were shut, giving the house a deserted air. There was a bill posted on the door which announced that it was to let, which helped to bear out the general appearance of the place.

"I don't go in there, that's certain," muttered George, satisfied that he only had to do with some common crook who in some way had learned his name, and he was just about to turn away when suddenly the inside blinds of one of the windows were thrown back, and a bright light shot up in the room behind, revealing the face of Minnie Malloy pressed against the panes. She smiled and beckoned to George.

Then instantly the light vanished and the blinds were closed, giving the house the same deserted appearance it had worn before.

CHAPTER IX.—Pictures on the Wall.

George ran up the steps without hesitation, determined to follow the mystery to the end. No need to ring the bell; the door swung open on well-oiled hinges as he approached, instantly closing behind him. George now found himself in utter darkness. That it made him nervous cannot be denied. A strange sense of fear caught him. The darkness was too much for him. He caught hold of the knob and tried to open the door. Probably he would have gone outside in a hurry if he could have done this, but he couldn't. The door refused to budge. It was as firm as a rock.

"I wouldn't try it, if I was you, George," said a voice behind him.

It was Harry Howland's voice. Although he could see nobody George did not fail to recognize it. That it made him feel very uncomfortable need scarcely be said. Before he had time to reply, a door leading into what had once been the parlor in the days when the house was occupied by some old New York family, was suddenly thrown open, and George saw Harry standing in a blaze of light with a sumptuously furnished room behind him. It was then only with the old enemy and not the one-eyed man that he had to deal.

"Hello, George! How do you find yourself?" asked the would-be burglar, with an evil smile upon his dissipated face. "I've been trying for some weeks to have an interview with you. Hard to get at these rich New York merchants. If I'd called at the store you'd have kicked me out, of course, but you can't get out of here, dear boy, until I'm ready to let you, so you may as well walk into my parlor, as the spider said to the fly. Ha, ha, ha! I'm the spider and you're the fly—see!"

Harry poked George familiarly in the ribs and laughed loud and long. When George went into that room—and of course he had to do it—the worst of it was the thought that Minnie Malloy betrayed him.

"What do you want?" he asked. "If you've got any business with me now is your time."

"Oh, thank you, my beneficent bootblack! Thank you, my noble newsboy! Thank you a thousand times, you young usurper! I suppose it ain't anything that you've robbed me of my uncle's business, and——"

"Stow that and get down to business, you idiot!" called a deep voice from some concealment; it might have come from behind the heavy portieres which hung where the folding doors should have been.

Howland bit his lip angrily and proceeded to light a cigarette.

"Well, it's business then," he growled. "George, you balked us that night, but we've got you now. What did you do with it? You haven't sold it, consequently you must still have it. We want it and we mean to have it—that's all."

"How can I tell what I don't know? I haven't the faintest idea what you refer to. It's all nonsense to suppose it. I——"

The sentence was never finished. Two men glided from behind the portieres, and were stealing toward George. It was the one-eyed man and an old Chinaman. Suddenly the former caught him by the forehead with both hands, and pressed him back against the cushion with an iron grip.

"Quick, Fung, quick!" he exclaimed. "Hold his feet, Howland. Blast the little snoozer, how he kicks!"

Fung was getting in his fine work while the one-eyed man thus exclaimed. Thrusting his left thumb and forefinger into George's mouth, he opened it as if he had been a horse, and deftly turned the contents of a small vial containing a colorless liquid down his throat. The stuff burned like fire, and in an instant the poor boy's brain was all in a whirl. This was followed by a pleasant sensation of perfect peace, and with it came perfect helplessness, too. All that was passing George knew, but he could not move so much as an eyelash—had no desire to, in fact. Harry Howland and the Chinaman were feeling in his pockets, and searching his clothing from head to foot, but he cared nothing for that. Presently Harry had gone; so had the one-eyed man—so had old Fung. The portieres had been drawn aside, and George was looking through into another room, looking at a dead white wall, and something seemed to tell him that this was no vision, but real. Suddenly there was a flash of light upon the wall, and out of that light came a picture just as one sees a lantern slide thrown on a screen. Still unable to move, George saw himself upon the wall dressed like a sailor. It was a full length figure. He was carrying a man in his arms up out of the sea.

Then the picture vanished, and another succeeded it. In the background was a vast ruined structure, a heathen temple, surrounded by tall palms. George saw himself moving toward the temple. It was like the kinetoscope; the figures were all alive; an old man dressed as a Chinaman came out of the temple, and held up both hands warningly. Then George saw himself rush forward, strike him a blow on the head, and knock him

down, whereupon the man who had been carried up from the water, suddenly appeared at the temple door. It was Mr. Jed Pixley, looking much as when George last saw him, but younger. He motioned George the shadow to enter, and he did so. Instantly the picture vanished, and George—the real George—found himself staring at the white wall.

CHAPTER X.—Minnie to the Rescue.

Breathlessly George watched the white wall. Would more of these strange pictures appear to puzzle his bewildered brain? They were coming now. In quick succession they followed each other. George saw the interior of the ruined temple; Mr. Pixley was there—he was there—they were with a Chinaman who much resembled the old man down in Mott Street; they were fighting their way through a crowd of wild looking Chinamen, and they beat them off. Then George saw that Pixley was wounded; saw him fall to the floor while he—that is, George saw himself—rushed to the big altar of the temple and took down a small idol of hideous aspect which the Chinaman pointed out. Next picture showed George with Pixley on his back running through the surf toward a boat, followed by the Chinaman, and closely pursued by a mob of Chinese who hurled spears at them and great stones, and fired ancient looking guns. This picture was succeeded by others—it is impossible to describe them all.

"This is only an ordinary lantern," he thought. "It is only clap-trap; whoever these people are they are trying to work me for something and I ain't in it if there's any chance to escape."

With George to think was to act. At least he could make the attempt. Noiselessly he slipped out of the chair and dropped to the floor. From the door he looked up at the wall. The picture exhibition was still going. Interesting as it was to him, and it was wonderfully so, George turned his head away and crawled on his hands and knees to the door. It was locked when he laid his hand on the knob, but all in the same instant the key turned in the lock, and the door was stealthily opened.

There stood Minnie Malloy! She held up her finger, and motioned to George to follow. Her other hand grasped something under her shawl. George noiselessly rose to his feet and followed Minnie through the dimly lighted hall to the door of the next room, where she paused, motioning to him to look through the keyhole, which he did. There was Harry Howland working a big magic lantern. George could see him putting in the slides. The one-eyed man was there, too. He seemed to be greatly interested, and so was George, when he heard Howland suddenly say:

"He seems awfully quiet in there. Better go in and see if the dose has been too much for him—perhaps he has gone to sleep."

"Quick, George, as you value your life!" breathed Minnie, catching those words.

She seized George by the arm and hurried him up the stairs, but the noise they made in their haste seemed likely to compromise their safety, for all in an instant there came a shout from below, and the doors were banged open and there was a rush through the hall for the stairs.

"Quick! Quick!" breathed Minnie. "Oh, George, if they kill you I shall never cease to blame myself. Quick, for my sake!"

Up one pair of stairs and then another, and then a pause before a closed door. It was locked, but Minnie had the key. While she was trying to use it Harry Howland and the one-eyed man came rushing up. "We are lost!" cried Minnie. "Oh, if I could only make it work!"

"Hold on there or I fire!" cried Howland. "You're a dead duck, George Porterfield, if you don't stand where you are!"

Click went the lock! Minnie flung open the door and drew George inside a closet, where there was a ladder leading up to the roof.

"Up with you, quick!" the girl whispered.

George ran up the ladder, threw aside the scuttle, and in a second was on the roof lending Minnie a helping hand. Of course they expected Howland and the one-eyed man to come flying up the ladder after them, but instead of that the sharp report of a pistol was heard below, then a shout and the sounds of a scuffle, and then someone ran noisily downstairs and a door slammed. Quick footsteps were running down the street. Minnie hurried George to the cornice, and they peered over, catching sight of Harry Howland making off as fast as his legs could carry him, with the one-eyed man close at his heels.

"Hello! Something has happened!" exclaimed Minnie; "this ain't the programme. But we can't stop here. Come to my room, George, and be quick. I've got a lot to tell you, and I must tell it now while it's safe."

Minnie hurried to the scuttle of the next house which was pushed aside. A moment later George found himself in a plainly furnished room behind a locked door. Minnie lighted the gas and stood listening. Although she had been careful to fasten the scuttle down, she seemed to be in deadly fear.

"Oh, George!" she breathed. "I've got it! I've got it at last!"

"Got what?" demanded George, too much puzzled to have one clear idea left in his head.

"This!" replied Minnie, throwing aside the light shawl which she had worn, and producing a hideous Chinese idol about three feet high.

"Minnie! What does all this mean?" he demanded. "It's mystery, mystery—nothing but mystery! Will it ever be explained?"

"It will be explained right now, George," replied the girl. "This thing is worth a fortune! I have worked for it, George. I have worked hard for it, and I have done it all for your sake. Take it. The thing is mine, but I give it to you."

And Minnie placed the idol in George's hands, a peculiar thrill shooting through him as he touched it.

CHAPTER XI.—The Mystery of a Heathen God.

"Sit down, George," said Minnie, more calmly, as George stood staring at the idol, which was made of alabaster, highly colored in red and black, and was as heavy as lead. "Put that thing on the table and listen to me, for I have a lot to tell."

"I am sure I'm only too ready to listen to anything you have to tell me, Minnie," was the reply, and George put the idol on the table and sat down.

"Keep your mind on what I am saying for a

few moments. Turn your back on the idol. You've done the right thing by me, George, and I would be ungrateful enough if I didn't do the same by you. First let me ask you a question. Who was your father?"

"Now you ask me too much. I am Nobody's Son. In other words, I don't know."

"I can tell you then. You are the son of Captain George Porterfield, who formerly sailed for Mr. Pixley. On one of these voyages many years ago, Mr. Pixley accompanied him to China, and the vessel on which they sailed was wrecked on an island at the mouth of the Yang-tse-kiang river. You were a baby then, and your mother had died on the voyage out. All hands were lost that night except Mr. Pixley and your father and a Chinaman, and with you wrapped up in blankets they escaped in an open boat, landing on the island in the early morning. Mr. Pixley was almost dead with exposure, and your father had to carry him ashore, which he did at the risk of your life, for you were left in the boat on the sand bar some distance away."

"Why, I saw all that in the picture!" cried George.

"Yes, but listen. Now, George, I don't know all the story, for when Moy Jin began to tell me he was very near death, but this much is certain; on that morning, your father and Mr. Pixley entered a ruined temple and took this idol from the altar—the picture showed you that, too?"

"Yes."

"Of course I know it, for I saw them as well as you. There was trouble. The idol was a very sacred thing guarded by many priests. There was an attack. Your father fought bravely and escaped with his prize, carrying Mr. Pixley, who was wounded, with him. They escaped to the boat, and managed to make their way to Shanghai with their prize. Here your father suddenly disappeared, and the idol disappeared with him. He was supposed to have been murdered by the agents of the Chinese priests from the island, and you were supposed to have been killed, too, and there the first chapter of my story ends. Mr. Pixley returned to New York, and the matter was forgotten until one day he received this letter. I saw it when it came, and wrote the answer of it which I made a copy from the letter-book. Here it is, George."

Minnie opened the bureau drawer, took out a letter and placed it in George's hand. George opened the letter and read as follows:

"MR. JED PIXLEY:

"Dear Sir—Strange as it may seem to you, I still live. Where is my son? Have you fulfilled your promise? Have you cared for him as though he was your own? Have you adopted him and made him your heir, as you promised that awful night when at the risk of my own life I saved yours? I assume that you have, for I believe you to be a man of your word. God bless my boy, and God bless you for your care of him. I have suffered fearfully. For years I have been a slave in a Chinese temple, and all because we stole the idol—you remember! If you don't, the pictures I send herewith will recall it all. I have drawn them in my leisure moments, so that that whole affair may be recalled to your mind. Show them to my son and tell him all. Now for business. I have escaped. The idol I buried at the time of my

capture. I have unearthed it and now ship it to you by the same steamer which brings this letter. You remember the locket? The key is in it, but do not let my boy use it. The idol is not ours. It belongs to the priests of the island temple, and I desire that it be returned to the only living representative of the head of the order—the son of the man I killed to save your life. His name is Moy Jin Kee; he is now living in New York. I ship the box in his name. Let the locket be opened and the key given to him. This is the only retribution I can make for my crime, and I'm sure you will concur. There is a curse upon the thing. Later you may see me, but not now. I am an old and broken man, and have no desire to return to America until I can retrieve my fortunes, which I am now in a fair way to do. This is all. Let my son write to me. Don't fail me. Your old friend,

"GEORGE PORTERFIELD."

George looked up from the letter with his brain all in a whirl.

"And this is the thing which has cursed my father's life!" he exclaimed, staring at the idol. "What's the rest, Minnie? Why does Harry Howland want it? Why am I here tonight?"

"Wait, George and listen; but first understand one thing. You don't know all. Harry Howland does, for his uncle evidently told him. You remember his efforts to get it? Of course you do—you can never forget that. You remember the burglary? Of course again. That was for another purpose. That meant the locket, George. You've got it. Harry thought you kept it in the safe."

"My locket!" cried George. "Why, I've always had it. It was around my neck as far back as I can remember. Here it is! Is that what the letter means?"

And George ran his hand down inside his shirt and pulled up a small gold locket of peculiar pattern.

"It's all I had to identify myself with," he said, "and one day I managed to open it and found inside—"

"The key! The key!" cried Minnie in great excitement. "Quick, George! Give it to me! Understand that the idol is mine, although I give it to you. Moy Jin gave it to me on his death bed, if I could recover it. I have recovered it. Understand the rest. This letter is to be read now."

And Minnie produced another letter of later date, which George read as follows:

"MR. JED PIXLEY:

"Dear Sir—I have held back the shipment. It ain't safe. I sent by the steamer a box, as I said in my last. It was filled with stones. This is for Chinamen who will try to steal it. Let them have it. The real box goes via Liverpool, and will reach you a few days later. My fond love to my boy.

"G. P."

"That explains another part of the mystery," said George quietly, folding up the letter. "Now, Minnie, about this key?"

"Yes, yes, the key!" cried Minnie, her eyes blazing with excitement. "You have got it?"

"No."

Minnie's face fell.

"Oh, George! Then we'll have to break the idol,

and Moy Jin warned me not to do it under pain of death."

"What can you mean, Minnie? Listen! I opened the locket one day and all it contained was this paper—see."

George pressed a spring and the locket flew open. Inside was a scrap of paper which he unfolded and held up to the light. There were just two words written on it and an address.

"See Snooks." Those were the words. The address was the old lawyer's number on Nassau Street.

"Did you see him?" Minnie gasped.

"Why, of course—you know! It gave me the business."

"Yes! That's Mr. Pixley's writing, George."

"It is! Then he must have opened the locket and taken out the key. I never thought of its being his writing before."

"It looks so. Where can it be? Harry Howland thinks you have it. George, I was determined to solve this mystery and I've been playing detective. I hired this room. I let Harry make love to me. I promised to appear at the window and lure you into that house next door. I did all this for your sake and for my own."

"For my sake, Minnie! You said that Moy Jin gave the idol to you. But why should I want the thing? What is the rest of this strange story? Why—"

"Why!" cried Minnie. "Because inside that idol is a diamond worth at least two hundred thousand dollars, and— Good Heavens, George! Look! Look! The idol is gone!"

And gone sure enough it was. The table upon which it had been placed was near a window, and that window now stood wide open and outside was a fire-escape—it was an easy matter for the thief to come and go. George rushed to the window and looked out. There was no one on the fire-escape, no one visible in the yard below, but as George rushed he saw a man scale the fence of the next yard beyond. He carried the idol in his hand and was closely muffled with coat collar turned up and hat pulled down over his eyes. In an instant he had vanished over the fence and was seen no more.

CHAPTER XII.—Chasing a Diamond.

"Harry Howland!" cried George. "He's got the best of us again. He sneaked up the fire-escape, and this is the result."

"No more Harry than I am!" said Minnie. "Quick, George! We may head him off yet. Oh, how could we be so careless? How could we?"

Minnie clapped on her bonnet, and throwing open the door, hurried down the stairs, passing out into the street inside of three minutes from the time the discovery was made. George hurried after her, thanking his stars that he had stopped to take his hat when he escaped from the mysterious house.

"Three doors below, Minnie!" he whispered. "Look! there's a hack at the door! There he comes! Too late!"

A man suddenly darted out by the basement way of the house in question, sprang into the hack, which started down Eighth Street at a rattling pace. Another hack was passing, and George saw that it was empty. The driver was

only too glad to get what looked like a profitable fare.

"Twenty dollars to keep that hack in sight to its destination," said George, as the driver drew up to the curb.

"Yours for keeps!" said the driver. "You're the kind of fellow I'm looking for. Jump in."

"We'll do it, Minnie," said George, as they went bowling down Eighth Street. "Now for the rest of your story. Where has the idol been all this past year?"

"Ask Harry Howland," replied Minnie. "Mr. Pixley never meant to give it up. It was a box of stones he intended for Moy Jin Kee. He hid the real box in his house, and Howland found it there, but it took him a year to do it. He only got it two weeks ago."

Suddenly the hindermost hack stopped, and the driver appeared at the door.

"Your man has gone in there, boss," he said, pointing to one of the palaces opposite Central Park.

"Who lives there?"

"Don't know, I'm sure. I think I've earned my twenty dollars, though."

"You have, and here it is," replied George, handing over the money.

A moment later found George and Minnie standing together in the shadow of the park wall watching the mysterious house.

"What's to be done now, George?" questioned Minnie. "It looks as if we'd come to the end of our rope."

"I don't give it up so. Let's get across and see if there's a name on the door. On second thought you stay here, Minnie; I'll go alone."

George stole up the steps and struck a match, keeping a sharp lookout for the policeman on the beat. There was a door-plate on the door, and a name on the door-plate. As he read it George started back in amazement.

"G. Porterfield," was the way it read.

The name on the door was his own!

CHAPTER XIII.—"I'm Ready to Die for George"

When George Porterfield ran up the steps of the Fifth avenue palace, his heart was full of love for his pretty typewriter, and Minnie Malloy, leaning against the park wall watching, was full of love for him. So Minnie watched him light the match and bend down to look at the door plate. She expected every minute to see him run down the steps, but instead of that George just stood there staring. Then to Minnie's utter amazement she saw the door swing open, and George stepped inside; the door closed behind him and he was gone. While she was waiting, a change began to come over the great house. Lights flashed up in the different windows. The inside blinds were thrown back, displaying a wealth of lace curtains and glittering chandeliers. Greatly disturbed, Minnie still watched and waited. It was yet early in the evening, scarcely nine o'clock. Plenty of time remained for a social gathering in the Fifth avenue palace, and that evidently was what it was going to be, for just then a stylish private carriage rolled up, and two ladies in evening dress alighted. In a few moments there was another and then another.

"I'm going to know what all this means," she

murmured, setting her lips firmly. "There seems to be no end to the trouble the idol brings to whoever possesses it. Moy Jin was right. There's a curse on the thing. I had better never had meddled with it. He told me so, but I wouldn't hear."

Now we may as well mention right here that the late Moy Jin Kee was a very sensible fellow, and a thoroughly Americanized Chinaman, who even on his death-bed had the interests of his pretty sister-in-law at heart. He would have died without explaining the mystery of the idol, but Minnie, thinking that she was acting in George's interest, had urged him. Thus the story came out, and the results were beginning to show. Mystery had succeeded mystery. As fast as one was explained another cropped up. The greatest mystery of all to Minnie was when watching her opportunity between the now rapidly arriving carriages she stole up the steps and read the name "G. Porterfield" on the door. It went through the girl's heart like a knife. George had deceived her. He knew more of this matter than he had told. It all seemed very plain as she hurried down the steps again with her brain in a whirl.

"I had better mind my own business," she thought. "I'll go back to my room and drop the whole thing. If George wants to find me, he knows where to come."

Jealousy? Well, perhaps. Minnie was mad. She didn't like to be deceived, and she thought she had been, as she walked rapidly down the avenue, bent only upon getting away from the house as fast as she could. But sharp eyes were watching her, and before she had gone half a block she heard rapid footsteps following. It might be George, she thought, and she turned to look, just as a heavy hand was laid on her shoulder, and found herself face to face with Detective Billy Pym.

"Good-evening, Miss Minnie," he said, quietly. "So you got tired of waiting, did you? Well, I'm not surprised. You began the fight bravely, but it's just like a woman to drop it at the most critical point as you have done."

"What do you mean?" demanded Minnie in amazement. "What do you know about my affairs, Billy Pym?"

"Not all there is to know, perhaps, but enough. If it hadn't been for me Harry Howland would have killed George tonight. If it hadn't been for me you might still have been musing with the Chinese idol. Perhaps you would have been tempted to break it open and both of you would have died."

Minnie leaned against an electric light pole and stared.

"Billy Pym, who has told you all this?" she demanded. "You are talking about secrets which you ought to know nothing about. Who has given me away?"

"Nobody."

"Nonsense! Don't try to deceive me!" cried the girl, stamping her foot in a rage. "You have come out of that house. You have seen George. He has told you. He has been deceiving me. I've been a fool. I—"

"Stop, Minnie!" cried the detective. "Listen to me. I've been working on this case for a year. I began it for my own satisfaction. I wanted to solve the mystery of that Maiden Lane

robbery. I've kept it up for George's sake. You talk about your idol and your diamond. Why, my dear girl, there's a million involved in it. Give George his rights, and he'll throw Mr. Pixey's business to the winds and toss the idol and its diamond into the sea. In all the history of strange happenings in New York there never was such a strange fortune as awaits George Porterfield if I can only carry this case through to the end, and mind what I tell you, Minnie, don't you let any petty jealousy on your part interfere."

"If you'll explain—"

"I won't—I can't! Are you ready—yes or no. If you won't help me I must act alone."

"Yes, then," replied Minnie, in desperation. "I'm ready for anything—I'm ready to die for George."

"Then follow me," said the detective, and he led the way back to the great house.

CHAPTER XIV—George Finds That He Has the Key.

George knew well enough that there were other Porterfields in New York besides himself. He had often seen their names in the directory, and as he looked at the door plate he suddenly recalled the fact that one of them lived far up on Fifth avenue. This was Admiral Porterfield, a retired naval officer. George remembered wondering if the admiral could be any relation to himself. He was just about to turn away and rejoin Minnie at the park wall, when the door was suddenly opened, and there, to his amazement, stood Billy Pym and an old white-headed gentleman.

"George Porterfield! What ill wind blew you here?" gasped the detective, completely thrown off his guard.

It was for this that Billy blamed himself later. The instant the words were spoken the old man seized George's hand and drew him into the house, shutting the door behind him.

"George Porterfield! Is this really George Porterfield?" he exclaimed in a low voice. "What good fortune! Mr. Pym, I congratulate you. You are a sharper man than I took you to be."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Billy, controlling the chagrin and uneasiness which he really felt. "This is George Porterfield fast enough, though. How are you, George? Let me make you acquainted with Admiral Porterfield. Perhaps he's a back-door relation of yours. Shouldn't wonder. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come right up to my room," said the old gentleman. "My niece gives a birthday party here to-night, and we are just about to throw the house open. We can't talk here."

George thought of Minnie, of course. But what harm could come to her by waiting? He was burning with curiosity to see the end of this strange adventure, and it is not surprising that he followed those two up-stairs. Mr. Porterfield flung open the door of a far handsomer bed chamber than the boy had ever seen. The gas was burning brightly, and there was a comfortable wood fire crackling on the hearth; but what struck George's attention was the Chinese idol which stood upon the table between the windows, looking as ugly and mysterious as ever.

"Sit down, young man," said the old gentleman. "Sit down and make yourself at home. I see you are looking at my Chinese god. Curious thing, isn't it? Did you ever happen to see it before?"

"If I keep as cool as he is I may find out something," thought George; "but if I don't I'm in the soup."

"Yes; I've seen it before," he replied, dropping into a chair. "It would be strange if I hadn't, seeing that it was stolen from me not an hour ago."

"So? Well, well!" cried Mr. Porterfield, rubbing his hands. "That's strange! The thing has been stolen frequently it would seem. Now, then, young man, who are you and what do you know about yourself? I'd like to find out whether you are any relation of mine or not."

"It seems to me," replied George, deliberately, "that I'm the one to ask questions. There's my property; how did it come here? Perhaps you'll explain."

"I can't talk family business before strangers," said Mr. Porterfield. "Mr. Pym, if you'll pardon me—"

"Oh, you want me to get out," said Billy.

"If you'll be good enough to step into the next room—"

"Certainly."

"I'll call you when we are through."

Exit Billy. Mr. Porterfield locked the door when he was gone, and turning suddenly on George exclaimed, in a low, hissing whisper: "The key! Give me the key!"

"What do you mean? I've got no key!"

"You lie, you young scamp! You have it—you have the locket—you had it when I turned you out into the streets!"

There was a curious light in the old man's eyes. If George had been more experienced he would have recognized it as the light of madness, for mad he certainly was, and as subsequent developments showed, probably had been for years, although few who knew him had ever suspected the fact. But George did not suspect. He was overwhelmed with amazement.

"You turned me out into the streets!" he exclaimed. "I thought Mr. Pixley did that. Who are you?"

"Bah! Who am I? Why, your uncle to be sure. You are my brother's son. Why should Pixley be bothered with other people's brats? He gave you to me. I gave you to the first rag-picker who came along. I'd have wrung your neck if I had dared and I'll do it now if you don't give me the key."

"I have no key. Let me out of this. I want nothing to do with you," gasped George, backing toward the door.

He was frightened now, and he had reason to be, for the look in the old man's face was positively devilish.

Billy Pym little dreamed what a scrape he had got his friend into as he waited in the next room.

"Sit down!" hissed Mr. Porterfield, and he made one leap for George and pushed him back into a curious looking armchair which stood against the wall near the door.

The instant George came in contact with the chair he found himself a prisoner. Two iron bars shot out from the sides and gripped his arms; two more came out with equal sudden-

ness from below and caught his legs. George was held fast in this vise-like grip.

"Ha! ha! ha! Now you are at my mercy!" chuckled the old lunatic. "Now I'll have the key!"

He sprang upon George, and clutching his throat with one hand, ran the other down inside his shirt, pulling up the locket.

"The same," he chuckled. "You're the boy! If I had guessed what this meant it would never have been left around your neck when I gave you to the rag-picker. Now to open it—this side—no—that's empty—the other—yes—so! I thought there was no secret spring ever made that I could not work. Here it is! Here is the key!"

It was a curious bit of bronze which he drew from the interior of the locket through the opening of which George had never dreamed. Was it actually the key to the idol? Was the diamond about to be revealed? Evidently Mr. Porterfield believed it, for he waved it triumphantly, and with that same insane laugh, kept exclaiming:

"Here it is! The key! The key!"

CHAPTER XV—The Idol Gives Up the Diamond and Does Desperate Work.

Meanwhile Billy Pym was making himself very much at home in the other room, which was fitted up as a sort of workshop. Here were mechanical contrivances of all sorts; a carpenter's bench, a foot lathe, a furnace and many tools. But Billy paid no attention to all this. There were desks in the room, and he had opened one of them with a skeleton key. Pigeon holes and drawers now claimed his attention. Bundles of papers were hurriedly run over, and the detective kept a furtive eye on the door as he did it, listening at the same time for every sound from the next room.

"He seems to have kept everything, and the will ought to be here somewhere," he muttered. "If I could only put my hand on it! Heavens! I hope it's safe to leave George with him. There! he's laughing again. Of course he's away off, but I don't think he would do the boy any harm."

Foolish Billy Pym! Again it was a case of a mistaken detective. It might have been better for George if he had called for help about that time. But George was a smart boy, and was trying to help himself. Tight as the bars of the mechanical chair held him, he found that he could move his wrists a bit, and he felt sure that with a little exertion he would be able to work them free. He was doing this, and at the same time his eyes were riveted upon his uncle, who now approached the idol and was trying to fit the key into some aperture in its mouth.

"The diamond now!" he was saying. "The diamond! It's here, no doubt. My brother was no fool. Neither was Pixley. He knew. He often described it to me. No fool did I say? Yes he was a fool—a fool ever to think of turning this over to a stupid Chinaman after all he'd suffered to get it and hold it. Confound the thing! Why won't it work? Ha! It is working now!"

So was something else! If he had looked behind him he would have seen the iron bars of the mechanical chair suddenly shoot back out of sight among the drapery. In his twistings and turnings George had unwittingly touched the secret spring that reversed the lever and the job was

done—he was free. He arose noiselessly and stood watching his uncle, who was fumbling away with his hand in the big, gaping mouth of the idol with his back turned. Suddenly the head flew back and out from the hiding place thus revealed. Mr. Porterfield drew something bright and glittering which flashed like a blazing star.

"The diamond! The diamond!" he cried. "At last I have it! Ha, ha, ha!"

He wheeled around suddenly, and all in an instant George had seized the diamond and wrenched it away.

"This is mine!" he cried, "and I ain't going to be cheated out of it! Don't touch me! I mean business! Open that door!"

It was a brave move, but it failed. The old man with the quickness of a tiger, caught George by the throat and threw him against the wall.

"You fool," he hissed. "Keep the diamond until I'm ready to take it from you!" He stamped upon the floor, and all in an instant a panel opened behind our hero, sliding noiselessly to one side. With a violent push Mr. Porterfield forced him through it, and the panel immediately shot into place again.

"Ha, ha, ha! Two birds with one stone!" he chuckled. "The diamond is safe enough till I want it, and the boy will never see the light of day again. Now for the detective. I must dispose of him, but first I had better close the idol. It won't do to let him think that the diamond has been taken out."

He unlocked the door and turned hastily to the table, and as he did so struck against it—the idol toppled over and fell to the floor. Instantly there was a loud report, and the Chinese god was shattered into a hundred pieces, while Mr. Porterfield, who had bent over to pick it up, fell backward with a sharp cry, and lay there groaning when Billy Pym came rushing in.

"What's the matter? What has happened? Where's George?" demanded the detective, bending over the old man.

"The diamond!" groaned Porterfield. "He has it! Ha! He has it, and death is my part. His, too—blast him! His, too! He can never escape! Water, water! Hold me up! I'm choking! The will! Get me the box! I must destroy the will before I die!"

It looked just then as if it was too late for Mr. Porterfield to destroy anything—very much as if he had destroyed himself. His eyes closed, his head fell over on the detective's shoulder, and while strains of sweet music and the sound of dancing feet came up from below, he lay there as one dead.

CHAPTER XVI.—Minnie Is Caught in the Trap.

As a detective Billy Pym was first-class; as a smart young man generally he had few equals, but on this occasion he found himself all at sea. All in an instant a terrible tragedy had been enacted in Admiral Porterfield's room. The old admiral lay dead or dying and George had mysteriously disappeared. So much for being partly posted. Billy knew a lot about the idol, but his information was derived entirely from the admiral, who hired him to hunt it up, and who had not mentioned its dangerous qualities, even if he knew them himself. There lay the idol blown into a hundred pieces: there lay the admiral in

a state of collapse. There was no one to explain what had happened, and Billy found himself all at sea. The first thing he did was to jump at the wrong conclusion that George had floored the old man and ran away. He stooped down, and raising the admiral, lifted him upon the bed. The old man was still breathing, and now he opened his eyes and muttered faintly: "The will—destroy it! The diamond! That boy! Oh, my head! My head!"

His head was all cut and bleeding, and the trouble seemed to be with his brain, for now he went off into unconsciousness again, and began breathing heavily.

"I must have help here," thought the young detective. "I've been much alone with this man lately. Next thing I shall be accused of killing him—that won't do."

He pondered a moment, and then hastily gathering up the broken pieces of the idol, tossed them into a closet, locked the door and put the key in his pocket. This done he rang the bell, and directed the servant who appeared in answer to send Mrs. Markham to him at once. Now Mrs. Markham was the housekeeper of the Porterfield mansion where the admiral lived with Miss Beatrice Porterfield, his niece, and several servants. No one knew the old man's many peculiarities better than Mrs. Markham—in fact she considered him quite insane.

"Bless me, Mr. Pym, what has happened?" exclaimed the housekeeper, bursting into the room.

"The admiral has had some sort of fit. He has fallen and hurt his head," explained Billy. "I was attending to some business for him in the workshop and heard the noise; when I came in I found him unconscious on the floor. Take care of him, Mrs. Markham, and I will run for a doctor."

"Get a nurse if you can," said Mrs. Markham. "I can't take care of the old sinner, and I won't. I told Miss Beatrice that fact only yesterday. Oh, dear me! To think that this should happen on the night of Miss Beatrice's party. It's a shame to spoil her pleasure! I—"

"Now, now, Mrs. Markham, don't bother," interrupted Billy. "Let the party go right on, and don't say a word. I'll fetch the doctor and a nurse, too, if I can. I'll be back just as quick as possible; meanwhile, allow no one to enter the room."

"If Minnie Malloy is still waiting outside she shall be the nurse," muttered Billy, as he hurriedly left the house.

Fact was, the detective had jumped to another conclusion, and it was based on the mysterious mutterings of the wounded man.

"This is not George's work," he thought. "That madman has done something with the boy. I must have help here. The will must be found. It shall be. Strange that I should have to ask help of Minnie Malloy, but nobody else will fill the bill, and I shall be lucky if I can put my hand on her now."

That Billy Pym was lucky enough to accomplish his desire we know already. As he and Minnie walked back to the house, the detective cued his brains to think how to explain the situation.

"Wait here on the corner until I run to the police box and telephone," he said to Minnie. "You won't leave until I come back?"

"No; if it is going to serve George Porterfield you can depend on me," replied Minnie—"you can indeed," and she was there at her post when Billy returned.

The detective had now sent for a doctor, and nothing remained but to introduce Minnie to the room where Admiral Porterfield still lay. The condition of the wounded man had not changed; he was still unconscious, but Mrs. Markham, who detested and despised him, and for excellent reasons, was only too willing to turn him over to the care of the supposed nurse.

"You will call me when the doctor comes, Mr. Pym," she said. "Miss Beatrice should be told of her uncle's condition then."

"Certainly I will," said the detective. "You may rely upon it. You may rely upon this young woman, too. I know her of old."

"Who is this man, Mr. Pym? What does all this mean? Where is George?" demanded Minnie the instant the door was closed.

"Don't ask me; I cannot tell you. Something has happened to George. Did you see him leave this house?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"I am positive. I was watching all the time."

"Yet he must have gone. He disappeared from this room in the most mysterious manner. I have every reason to believe that he left the house."

"Would he do it without coming to me, when I was watching there across the street?"

"There may be more ways than one of leaving it," muttered Billy, "and I've got to work to find out. Stay here, Minnie. Don't you leave the bedside till I return."

Minnie threw off her hat and shawl and prepared for work.

"See here, Billy Pym, you are George's friend, and I'm going to trust you," she said. "I'm all in the dark about this business, but I'm going to do just as you say."

"That's right. I'll explain later. Listen, Minnie; watch that old man closely, and if consciousness returns ever so little, say this: 'Where is the will?'"

"Where is the will? Yes, I'll say it. Porterfield was the name I saw on the door of this house, Billy. What is this man to George?"

"Uncle; ask me no more now. If he tells you where the will is lose no time in getting it. Hide it—keep it till I come, but before you make a move try to find out from him what has become of George, but don't use the name. Say Mr. Pym wants to know where the young man went. As for the rest, you must be guided by his answer, but don't go beyond the next room on any account until I return."

Scarcely had the detective's step died away when the unconscious man turned himself and opened his eyes.

"Pym! Mr. Pym!" he said, faintly. "I want Mr. Pym."

"Mr. Pym will be right back," said Minnie, bending over the bed. "He wants to know where the young man is whom he left here."

The admiral stared; his eyes rolled wildly.

"The will," he muttered. "Let the will be destroyed. George Porterfield never shall have the money—no."

Minnie's breath came fast.

"Where is the will? Tell me, and I'll destroy it."

"You—who are you? I don't know you."

"I am Mr. Pym's friend. I am your friend. Where is the will?"

"The will?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Oh, yes, the will. Let me think. Where is it? My head hurts me. Let me see—let me see. The will is in the treasure-room. The key is in my pocket—the key to the iron box. Take it—go and destroy the will."

With trembling hand Minnie felt in the old man's pockets—first one, then another, and at last she found a bunch of keys.

"I'll go," she said, "tell me where. I've got the keys."

"There! Press hard on the panel—touch the rose!"

He fell back heavily and the eyes closed again. Minnie glided to the chimney piece and pressed the rose which formed the central figure of the elaborate paneling alongside. Instantly the panel flew back as it had done when George was thrown against it, and Minnie waiting for nothing stepped inside. Snap went the panel behind her and one instant later detective Pym re-entered the room.

"What! The girl has gone back on me?" he muttered. "She has gone?"

He glanced at the bed and uttered a sharp cry. The admiral's jaw had fallen; he lay there rigid and motionless.

"Dead!" muttered Billy. "Dead!"

CHAPTER XVII—In the Treasure Room.

The moment Minnie Malloy stepped inside the panel she felt the floor sink beneath her feet. There was no rush, no sudden drop. It went down gently. It was, in fact, just another of the old admiral's curious mechanical contrivances, and George had his experience with it when he passed through the panel a short time before. Clutching the big diamond, George Porterfield went sinking down into the darkness as quiet and easy as a man would come down on an elevator from the top story of a high building. In a moment the floor stopped and a sliding door was heard to open. It was pitch dark and George could see nothing, so he struck a match. To his amazement he caught sight of a large room filled with curiosities of every description. It looked like a room in a museum, and George walked in. Click! Snap! The panel closed behind him. The match went out and he was in darkness again.

Of course George lit another match and this showed him an electric light fixture against the wall. He turned the key, and instantly a whole row of electric lights flashed up all around the room displaying its curious contents to the fullest advantage. It was the den of an indefatigable curiosity collector, a man with many hobbies—that was easy to see. The whole wall space was covered with shelves and glass cases. There were shells and stuffed birds, butterflies and insects; there were ancient weapons and stone implements, old coins and gold and silver jewelry, and vessels of various antique patterns. Besides these things there were many handsome cabinets, doubtless containing other treasures under lock and key. In these cabinets had George but known it was one of the largest collections of unset gems in America, to say nothing of a collection of ancient

coins of immense value. There was certainly method in Admiral Porterfield's madness. He preferred to enjoy his hobbies in his own way. Only those who could appreciate his treasures were ever admitted to the secret room. Neither his niece nor Mrs. Markham knew that it existed. Yet the secret was known to many prominent collectors, and among others to the carpenter who had constructed the shelves and the electrician who put in the lights. We mention the latter for reasons soon to be explained, being in no mood to study relics of antiquity, he gave one hasty glance around and turned to find the panel again.

It was there. It was the only vacant space on the walls of this singular room. Yes; the panel was there all right enough, but to open it was quite another thing. In vain George tried to find the secret spring. The whole surface was painted a dull black with no break, no knob, no secret button that he could discover. When George sounded it with his knuckles he wished he hadn't, for the panel was of solid steel, and he struck it with a force which made his whole arm tingle. Open it he could not. He tried until he was tired of trying, and then sank down in a comfortable easy chair and stared at it just as though that would cause the thing to move.

"Great heavens, this is a strange state of affairs!" he muttered. "Suppose the old man is dead upstairs? If the explosion of the idol killed him, and Billy Pym don't know the secret of this place, what is going to become of me?"

It was certainly not a pleasant thought, but it made him think of the diamond. He took it out of his pocket and looked at it. The big gem flashed and glittered in the electric light. Its size was fully that of an egg, and no small one either. It had been superbly cut, and George needed no one to tell him that the stone, if genuine, was of immense value.

"So this is the secret of all these strange happenings," he thought. "This cost my father the best years of his life; what fortune, good or bad, is it going to bring to me?"

Here was a problem, and George had plenty of time to ponder over it, for the best part of an hour passed and no sound reached his ears. But George did not spend his time in idly pondering. He soon returned to the panel, and failing there, again started to examine the rest of the wall space systematically. Cabinets were moved out and shelves were tried, and at last he was actually rewarded by touching some hidden spring, which caused a strip of shelving about three feet wide to swing slowly outward, bringing the wall with it.

Here was a door, but the hope it brought was speedily dashed to the ground, for it communicated with a dusty room not much higher than a closet, where there were boxes and pigeon-holed papers, and many books arranged on shelves, at all of which George was looking disconsolately, when all at once he heard a click and a snap in the big room outside.

"The panel!" he gasped, springing into the room.

Yes, it was the panel! It had opened, but it had also closed again.

"George! Oh, George!"

There stood Minnie Malloy in the full blaze of the electric light.

CHAPTER XVIII.—How Two Masked Men Came Out of the Closet.

"Minnie! What are we to do? Here we are prisoners, and if as you say Billy Pym cannot possibly know of the existence of this place, it looks to me very much as if we were likely to stop here for some time."

"Don't worry, George," replied the girl. "As for me it is enough that we are together again. Let us wait for Billy Pym to make a move, and be as patient about it as we can."

"But, Minnie! What an amazing state of affairs this is! One thing seems to lead to another. This story of the will——"

"Yes, yes, George! What about the will? Billy Pym was more anxious about that than he was to find you, I thought. What does it all mean?"

"Why, if you ask me about that I'm sure I've got no answer to give. Minnie, you seem to forget that I'm nobody's son."

"Well, if you are nobody's son, you are certainly somebody's nephew, and I must say I shouldn't care to have that dreadful old man upstairs for my uncle. Strange that the idol should explode after all and that he should be the victim. It seems almost like fate."

"About that will," said George, "I have no more idea than you have. You spoke of an iron box. I haven't seen any here. An iron box would be just the place for a missing will, and if the will relates to me, by thunder, I want to have a look at it, but first we must find the box, and I think I know a likely place to look."

"That's business," said Minnie. "I suppose you mean the closet?"

"I do. Let's make a thorough search in there."

"You are sure you can't open that panel, George? Of course, we want to get back to Billy Pym if we can."

"If you were to offer me a million dollars I couldn't do any more than I have done to open that panel, Minnie. It seems to open itself when the elevator comes down, but to open it from this side is something I can't do."

In fact, it was a clear case of having to make the best of it, and Minnie gave up with a sigh.

"We'll try for the iron box," she said, and then followed George into the closet where they searched for some time.

Iron boxes were plentiful there. They found four of them, but none of the keys would fit either. George was working over the fourth when all at once his attention was attracted by a curious sound down on the level with the floor.

"Hark! What is that?" exclaimed Minnie, who had heard the noise at the same instant.

"Blest if I'll ever tell you," replied George. "It sounds for all the world like somebody on the other side of that wall trying to break through."

"That's just what it is, George."

"Well, even so, what are we going to do about it?"

"Wait and see what happens. You are right. There is certainly someone working with a crow-bar trying to break through the wall."

For a few moments the sounds would continue, then stop, then begin again. It was more than

startling, and yet there was nothing to be done, and after a little they grew tired of listening and began poking around among the pigeon holes looking for another iron box. Suddenly George came upon one hidden behind a mass of papers which he pulled out.

"Here's another prize, Minnie!" he exclaimed. "Now to try the keys again."

This was a long job, for there were as many as twenty keys in the bunch. They returned to the museum and placed the box on the table while George worked, and all this time the pounding in the closet kept on just the same. Suddenly the lock clicked, and George threw the lid of the iron box back.

"There you are!" he exclaimed, in great excitement. "The iron box is open at last, and by gracious there's a will in it sure enough!"

There was nothing else in the box but a folded legal paper, which George hastily took out and held up to the light.

"The last will and testament of George Porterfield," was the endorsement on the back, and there was a date away back in the forties, years before "Nobody's Son" was born.

"This concerns me all right!" cried George, hastily opening the paper and spreading it out on the table.

Then he and Minnie bent over it together and read enough to open their eyes to the fact that it might concern George very much. An estate of a million and more was here disposed of—all New York City property of the most valuable kind. It was left to George Porterfield, beloved grandson of the testator.

"Can it be me!" gasped George. "Oh, Minnie, do you suppose it really can be me who is meant here?"

Crash! went the wall in the closet behind them before Minnie could answer, and brick and plaster came tumbling into the room, to be instantly followed by two men with black masks over their faces. One carried a dark lantern, and the other a revolver, which he pointed at George's head.

"Who are you?" he hissed. "Throw up your hands, young fellow, or you are a dead man!"

But instead of obeying, George made a spring for the revolver, while Minnie uttered a piercing scream. He was not quick enough. Instantly the masked man fired, and George with a sharp cry, fell face forward to the floor.

CHAPTER XIX.—On the Trail of the Diamond.

As George Porterfield fell to the floor of the old admiral's treasure-room, shot down by the bullet of the two masked men, Minnie gave another scream and flew at the one who had fired the fatal shot like a tigress.

"You wretch! Oh, you wretch! If you were twenty times my brother I'd kill you!" she screamed, seizing him by the throat.

"Take her off! Take her off! Great heavens, how came she here?" gasped the burglar, dropping the revolver and seizing Minnie with both hands.

One hand had lost a finger. The mask had not deceived Minnie. It was that notorious crook, Four-fingered Ed. Malloy. But he could not

shake off the frantic girl, whose screams might well have been heard in the room above, where the dead admiral lay. His partner rushed to the rescue. Seizing Minnie by the throat, he wrenched her away and speedily choked her into silence and convulsive sobs.

"We are dished, Ed!" he growled. "The whole house will be aroused by this. How in the blazes did your sister come to be here with this fellow? There! just as I thought. Someone coming now! We must light right out."

"What! After all our trouble! Without anything—no!"

"I go then. We've done murder here! I don't want to sit in the electric chair. Go we must, and the girl either goes with us or she dies."

"Take her along," said Ed. "I'm going to load up, anyhow, and—Heavens! What's this?"

It was only the diamond—that wonderful big diamond which had caused all the trouble. When George fell the diamond fell out of his coat pocket and there it lay beside him on the floor.

"Glass," said Ed's partner.

"Nonsense! A diamond!" cried Ed. "Don't I know? Run Minnie out now if you want to, Petey, this is enough for me!"

They seized poor Minnie and dragged her into the closet. Perhaps even then they might have waited to rifle some of the cases of their valuable contents, but suspicious sounds now made themselves heard; a pounding and the rattle of a chain. Minnie revived as they dragged her away, and her piercing scream was loud enough to wake the dead.

Perhaps it helped to call George Porterfield back to life. The bullet struck the boy in the head just above the left ear. For the moment it completely stunned him, but it had not done fatal work nor even injured him seriously. George gasped, choked, raised himself on one arm and stared around.

He was alone in the treasure-room then, but one minute later Billy Pym was bending over him. The elevator had come down again, and the detective could congratulate himself that he owed the discovery of the secret entirely to his own shrewdness, for his search for some secret means of leaving the death chamber above had resulted in the discovery of the spring.

"George!" cried Billy Pym, as he stepped through the secret panel.

Instantly it closed behind him. Shrewd as the detective had been, he still was not shrewd enough to avoid this. But he never knew it then—there was no time given him to think of it. There was George just staggering to his feet.

"Billy!" he stammered. "Thank Heaven you have come! Burglars! Minnie! The diamond! Help me, Billy! I'm going to faint again!"

And over went poor George into the chair before he could utter another word. It took Billy Pym fully ten minutes to bring him back to consciousness, and as much more to gain a clew to what occurred.

"And you have found the will!" he exclaimed, as George, reviving as he talked, came to that part of his strange tale.

"Yes; it is here on the table. What does it all mean?"

"What does it mean?" cried the detective. "Why, it simply means that you have been wronged out of your grandfather's fortune by

this scoundrel of an uncle. I mean Admiral Porterfield, as great a rascal as ever went unhung; but we'll talk no more about that now for he's dead."

"There must be no more talk about anything, Billy," cried George, springing to his feet with a sudden burst of energy. "Minnie—we must save her—those scoundrels have carried her away. Billy, we must go for them right now!"

"Exactly," replied Billy, grimly. "I'd like to bet that Four-fingered E. Malloy is at the bottom of this business, and that Minnie is all O. K. Why else would they bother with the girl? Come on, George. We want the diamond anyhow, whether we get Minnie or not, and I mean to have it if I follow that precious pair through every thieves' den in New York."

They hurried into the closet and George, pointing to the broken wall, showed the detective where the burglars came in.

"Ha! That's from the cellar of the house next door!" said the detective. "Follow me."

He stooped down and crawled through the break in the wall, passing into the cellar of a new mansion which was being built next to Admiral Porterfield's house. In a moment they were on the street level, and passing out of the building—which did not seem to be provided with a watchman according to the usual custom—found themselves on the avenue.

Carriages were still rolling up to the admiral's door, and sweet strains of music reached their ears. The evening party was still progressing, the guests little dreaming that the master of the house lay dead up-stairs.

"What's to be done now?" asked George. "Hadm't you better inquire of some of those drivers if they have seen two men and a girl going down the avenue? We may get a clew."

"A good enough suggestion, but it would take all night to follow them up that way, even if we should get a clew here," replied the detective. "Listen to me, George. All detectives have their theories, and I've got mine about this case."

"And that is—"

"To be told as we go; for the present I will only say that there is just one man in New York who would receive that diamond. I'm going to waste no time following up anyone else. I'm going to see old Mose Manders, the diamond 'fence,' and if we are in time, we may succeed in heading off the thieves."

Whereupon Billy Pym led the way around the corner, and started at a rapid pace toward the elevated railroad on Third avenue. And as they walked Billy began to talk, and to tell George all he knew about Admiral Porterfield and how he came to be employed on this strange case.

CHAPTER XX.—An Unexpected Meeting.

Billy Pym's story was a revelation to George. It showed him that the late Admiral Porterfield had been watching him for a year; ever since Mr. Pixley's death, in fact, which was the time our hero's name appeared in the papers.

"He sent for me about two months ago," said Billy, "and he indulged in so much curious talk that I suspected at once he must be something to you. First he sounded me to see if I was honest, and I made him believe I wasn't. Then he told me the story of the idol and about your

father, and proposed that I should try to entice you into his house, for he believed then that you had the idol in the store, and could be made to give it up. I pretended to try my hand at the business and to fail, but I kept holding out promises of success. All that time I was tracing up the business and watching Harry Howland, and at last I did actually get the idol, as you know, but I was working for your interests, George. Later on, words dropped by this madman—and he certainly was mad—led me to believe that he was at the bottom of your being abandoned when a baby, and that you were the real heir to your grandfather's vast estate, which was turned over to your uncle because the courts were made to believe that you were dead."

All this and more Billy Pym told George as they rolled down Third avenue in the elevated train. The train had now reached Chatham Square, and the detective, motioning George to follow him, hurriedly left it, and turned down Catherine street, following it almost to the river, where he stopped at last before a small shop in the window of which pistols, watches, jewelry, and all sorts of odds and ends were displayed. Over the door was the name, M. Manders. The window was dark, and the store appeared to be closed.

"Come down to the corner. I want to watch here a few moments," said the detective. "George, how does your head feel now?"

"It aches some, but it don't seem to bleed any more. Is there any blood on my face?"

"No! There hasn't been since we had it dressed in the drug store up Third avenue. It's a mere scratch, though it might have been serious. Do you feel equal to undertaking this thing, or had you rather leave it to me?"

"I'm with you in whatever you want me to do, Billy."

"Well, then, there's the shop we are heading for—where we stop, I mean. That's old Mose Mander's place. He'll buy anything in the way of diamonds, and he's terribly afraid of me."

"Which would mean that you are not afraid of him, Billy?"

"Afraid! Not a bit of it! I could railroad Mose to Sing Sing to-morrow, and he knows it, but the old shark is most secretive and a terrible liar, of course. If he denies all knowledge of the diamond, as he probably will, I don't just see how we are going to reach him, unless we strike at his pocket. Now, then, are you prepared to buy back your diamond, and what will you give?"

"Billy, I'm sure I don't know what to say. I know nothing of the real value of the stone."

"It's immense! It must be. Will you give five thousand dollars to get it back quietly without any fuss?"

"Yes; cheerfully. If that will end the business, but Minnie—"

"I tell you Minnie is all right. Trust her to take care of herself. That girl was born of crooked parents, and brought up among crooks, but she herself is as straight as a string."

"Billy, I believe you; if I didn't, I believe I should die."

"Hello, hello! What's all this," cried Billy.

"Simply that I love Minnie Malloy. She has promised to be my wife."

"Good enough! You couldn't have a better

one, George. I was going to say that since you are willing to put up the dust for the diamond I might as well go in and tackle old Mose alone. Have you got the dust with you? I suppose not, of course, but the old man will trust me, I guess."

"On the contrary I have," replied George eagerly. "Strange that I should happen to want it for a purpose like this. I drew out ten thousand from the bank this afternoon for a certain purpose which I needn't explain. As it happened I didn't use it, and so it's in my pocket now."

"Luck! Let's have five thousand."

"Better take it all. You may need it."

"No; five is enough. Mose would never advance more than a thousand on the diamond, and if I can't get it for five I'll pull the shop and take my chances. Look out how you flash your roll. There, I've got it. It's just five, I suppose."

"Just five, Billy. I had the money in two packages, five thousand in each."

"Good enough! Keep walking up and down, don't stand here or someone may get on to you. So long, George. I won't be many minutes. If they haven't been there you'll see me come right out."

Thus saying, Billy Pym walked boldly up to old Mose Mander's closed shop and shook the door knob. George saw him shake it three times, and then the door opened and Billy passed inside. George walked slowly past the shop. It was still perfectly dark, there was no sign of life within.

As he reached the next corner—we shall not state whether it was Water street or Front—a hack drove rapidly up to the door of the "fence" and stopped. Two men hastily alighted, and then a woman got out. The men rapped at the door of the fence in a peculiar way and were instantly admitted, but the woman turned and walked slowly up the street toward George who stood breathlessly watching her, for the instant she turned her face in his direction he saw that it was Minnie Malloy.

CHAPTER XXI.—More Mystery.

"Good-evening, Minnie! Where are you going so fast?"

George stepped out in front of the advancing girl under the electric light.

"George! Great heavens! What is this? Oh, George! George! I thought you were dead!"

It was a big mistake to do it so abruptly. For a moment George thought he was going to have a case of fainting on his hands, for Minnie staggered against the electric light pole and pressed her hand against her heart. But George was quick to act. Putting his arm through Minnie's he led her down the street.

"Brace up, Minnie! It's all right," he whispered, reassuringly. "Never mind how I escaped. That will keep till later. Billy did it. Billy is in Mose Mander's now. He's after the diamond, and—"

"And he won't get it, George."

"I think he will. Was that your brother?"

"Yes."

"Then Billy was right."

"It is my brother, and it's Peter Facfarlan, his

pal. Oh, George! I'm thankful I met you. A life may depend upon it—a life of great importance to you."

"What! What!"

"Wait! We are forgetting the diamond."

"Never mind the diamond, Minnie. I don't care a rap whether Billy gets it or not, so long as I've got you."

"But I care. Do you suppose for an instant that I'd go back on you, George?"

"No, Minnie, I don't."

"George, listen to me. I was brought up among criminals and thieves."

"So was I, Minnie. Don't forget that I'm nobody's son!"

"Nobody's son!" cried Minnie, stamping her foot in sudden energy. "We'll see about that! Have I done something for you to-night, George, or have I not?"

"Most decidedly you have, Minnie. You have done the greatest thing that any woman can do for a man; you have promised to be my wife."

"Not that! I don't mean that! The mystery which has overshadowed your life—"

"Is in a fair way to be solved through your efforts, Minnie. It may bring me a fortune, and if it does I shall owe all to you."

"It will bring you fortune. It has brought you fortune, George. Look here."

They had reached the next electric light pole now, and as Minnie suddenly stopped she drew something from her pocket and placed it in George's hand. How it flashed and glittered! How it caught the rays of light and reflected them back upon George's astonished eyes from its many shining facets.

"The diamond!" gasped George. "Oh, Minnie, what a girl you are!"

"Put it out of sight!" breathed Minnie. "Be quick! I picked Ed's pocket while we were in the hack. He's gone in to old Mose Mander's to dispose of it. What a row there'll be when he finds it gone. Oh, George, how I had to lie to put myself in position to do it, to get on good terms with my brother again. It makes me sick to think of it all, but I did it for your sake, when I believed you dead by my brother's hand."

"Do you know where I was going when you met me? It was to the Oak street station to give up my brother, to charge him with your murder, for a murderer he is at heart, and he has planned another murder to be done this very night which only you and I can prevent."

Minnie spoke so rapidly and with such earnestness, that George was fairly carried away with the torrent of words.

"What do you mean? What can we do?" he asked. "I don't understand it all."

"Follow me. Let my brother escape, if possible, let him be caught and punished if he must. Place yourself entirely in my hands, and I believe it lies in my power to-night to prove that you are not Nobody's Son."

"And Billy? We must wait for him!" said George, as Minnie grasped his arm and tried to draw him away.

"Let him take care of himself—he is able."

"The very words he said about you, Minnie, and Heaven knows he was right, but I hate to desert him, all the same."

"You must! For my sake, George."

"And why?"

"Don't argue! Can't you see? If we take Billy into the secret Ed is lost. Put yourself entirely in my hands."

"Minnie, I'll do it. I can refuse you nothing now."

"Then follow me, George, and may Heaven grant that we are able to prevent this crime."

Minnie turned and led the way toward South street, casting one look back at old Mose Manders' place before she made the move. She saw nothing suspicious, nor did George, who looked with her, but had they looked one second longer, they would have seen Billy Pym hastily leave the shop. He saw them—what is more he knew them.

"George and Minnie," he muttered. "For Heaven's sake what does this mean?"

He shot across the street and stole after them, looking back at the door which he had just left as he moved away. It was hard to keep his eyes on George and Minnie, and on the door, too, but Billy did it for the first few moments, and then the case grew worse.

George and the girl were nearing South street and in a moment would have turned either one way or the other, or else cross the street to the Catherine ferry-house—it was most important to know which if he intended to follow them up.

Billy cast one despairing look back at the door, and was rewarded by seeing Ed Malloy and Petey come hurriedly out. They also turned down toward South street. Hurrying on the detective looked ahead again. George and Minnie had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXII.—The Man at Mother Mag's.

The rage into which the young crook flew when he found the diamond gone was terrible to witness.

"I've been touched! I've been touched by my own sister!" were his first words.

But Billy Pym guessed the truth as soon as he saw the blank look on the fellow's face when he pulled his hand out of his pocket empty, and he lost no time in getting out of the fence, leaving old Mose Manders to settle with the crook.

"Minnie has the diamond, and I must get Minnie," thought the detective. "I don't like the way she has snaked George off and left me behind. Who can tell but what the girl is crooked yet?"

And Billy, who knew Minnie Malloy's past history well, had good reason for being alarmed, as he turned the corner of South street and looked right and left for George, but in vain.

If he had gone around into Oliver street, he would have seen George and Minnie hurrying along on the right hand side; and this, in fact, was just the turn the detective made, but he had need to be quicker than he was, for before he got around the corner, Minnie drew George into a narrow alley, which ran between two old-fashioned houses, the entrance to which was closed by a wooden gate painted green.

"Stop, Minnie! Why do we go in here?" breathed George. "Do you know what lies behind here—Mother Mag's!"

"Then you do know! You haven't forgotten your old life yet!"

"No, nor never shall. Why, Minnie, I used to live in the front house here when I was a boy."

"I know it," replied Minnie, quietly. "I used to live across the way."

"Then you were not Minnie Malloy in those days," said George emphatically. "I know you now, little Mamie Grogan!"

"Don't stop, George; little Mamie Grogan whose father was hanged for murder. Yes, I am your boyish sweetheart. I raised myself out of the slums just as you did and I changed my name, but you would never have known this if you had not proved that you still loved me. Can you trust me? Will you follow me into Mother Mag's?"

"Yes," replied George, throwing his arm around her. "I'll follow you anywhere; lead the way, Minnie. Afterward you can explain."

And Minnie walked straight through the alley, entering the rear house, a den where many a poor sailor had been made away with. George knew very well that this was the reputation the place bore. The door stood open and the hall was dark, but Minnie had no difficulty in finding her way to the door of the rear room, where she knocked. There was a shuffling of feet, and in a moment this door was opened by a horrible old woman who flashed a lamp in their faces.

"What's wanted?" she demanded. "Who are you? Ah, shure and it's Minnie Grogan! Oh, Lord love ye, girrul, go away! Go away!"

But Minnie was not going away. She pushed past the old woman and shut the door.

"Remember your promise, Mother Mag!" she said, in low, meaning tones. "Remember the night I saved you from the cops. Remember what you said to me then. If ever I wanted a favor to come to you and you would grant it, no matter what it was. I want a favor to-night, Mother Mag, and so I have come!"

The old woman put down the lamp and stood there in the middle of that shabby, dirty room, shaking her head and wringing her hands.

"No, no! Not to-night!" she whined. "Oh, Mamie, go away, go away and take your foine young gentleman wid yez. This is no time to ax for favors—you understand, my girrul—you understand."

Now, to a stranger in the slums the old woman's agitation would have been a mystery, but it was not to George. He knew as well as if he had been told that there was "business" to be done in Mother Mag's den that night, and although the old hag failed to recognize him, for which he was devoutly thankful, he remembered her perfectly well. There was nothing to be done but to leave it all to Minnie, and the girl showed herself entirely equal to the emergency.

"No Mother Mag!" she exclaimed. "To-night is the night I know you are expecting visitors. I know who they are and what it means. It is not to be, Mother Mag, and I am here to prevent it. The man's life must be spared. He must be given up to me."

"Impossible, Mamie! Impossible, my child! They'd kill me. This is a big case. Do you know who is working the riffle? Do you know that now?"

"My brother! Oh, yes, I know."

"Arrah! he has told you! More fool he! Go while there is toime! Go now, or—arrah, it's too late—too late! They are in the alley. I hear them coming. Get in here, and don't you show yourselves if you value your lives; sure, an' if

there's any help for the poor sucker, I'll do what I can."

Hastily opening the door of an inner room, where there was a dirty bed and a chair or two, Mother Mag pushed Minnie inside, George following in silence.

Heavy footsteps were heard in the hall outside. George's heart sank. He knew only too well what it meant, but Minnie knew better than he did, for she could see when the door was opened and two men came staggering in, bearing a third between them. Helplessly drunk this third man seemed to be as they dropped him on the floor. Behind the two toughs who did the carrying came Four-fingered Ed and Petey, his pal.

"Look!" breathed Minnie, moving away from the key-hole. "Look, George! It's a sailor being shanghaied. Look at his face!"

George took his place at the key-hole and peered into an adjoining room. A tall man in the prime of life lay unconscious upon the floor; his features were bronzed and weather-beaten, but he certainly did not look like a drinking man, and more than that, he did look astonishingly like George.

"I don't know him, but heaven help him whoever he is," whispered the boy.

"No, you don't know him, but you should know him," answered Minnie. "If my brother tells the truth, he is your father, George."

CHAPTER XXIII.—Through the Trap Door.

"My father!"

It was a wonder George was not heard in the room outside. Minnie clapped her hand over his mouth and drew him away from the door.

"Would you save him?" she whispered. "Then keep cool! I pretended to be friendly with my brother and I worked him so well, that I learned of this intended crime. It's an old story here, George. Knockout drops, a sailor just in port; into Mother Mag's, and never out again! Only this man is no sailor, but a passenger, and those two scoundrels are sailors on the steamer Boscowen Castle, just in from Hong Kong on which he came. They promised this victim to Ed at this hour, and he was to be on the wharf at the foot of the street to receive. Diamonds are what they are after. The man is loaded with them, so the sailors say. They told Ed that his name was Captain Porterfield and he at once guessed that he must be something to you."

George did not reply; bending down he peered through the key-hole again. He saw Four-fingered Ed in the act of searching the unconscious man. From one pocket he took a roll of money, from another a bag of sovereigns—the bag was opened and the gold displayed—from another still came a revolver, but the main object of the search was not found.

"Where are the diamonds? Where are the diamonds?" demanded Four-fingered Ed of the two men who had brought in the victim. "You swore they were on him, but I can't find hide nor hair of them—no!"

"They must be somewhere about him," replied one of the two sailors. "I saw him with them spread out in his stateroom more than once. Strip his clothes off; they must be there."

"Oh, for the love of Hiven be quick and stop

your jawing!" exclaimed Mother Mag, all in a tremble. "We'll have the cops down upon us first yez know."

"What do you mean?" demanded Ed, springing up. "What are you standing in front of that door there for, shivering and shaking? There's something wrong here! Who've you got hidden in that room?"

George heard, and Minnie, too, for the words were spoken loud enough to penetrate the door. Instead of answering, George stepped across the room and gently raised the window.

"Go, Minnie! Go! Slip in by the back door and through the hall—call the police!" he breathed. "I shall fight for my father! I'm going into that room!"

"Never, George! If my brother raises his hand against you I'll kill him! I——"

Slam—bang! In the same instant something was thrown heavily against the door. It flew open, and Ed Malloy flashed the light in calling out his sister's name. Instantly George sprang upon him, seizing the wretch by the throat.

"Look to yourself, Ed Malloy!" he shouted. "I am desperate! That man is my father! Mother Mag's trap door shall never claim him for its own."

It was madness—mere madness. Not a word was spoken, but in one instant George lay unconscious on the floor, knocked out by a blow from the clenched fist of Petey.

"Oh, wurra, wurra! Don't kill the girrull! Don't kill little Mamie, Ed!" cried Mother Mag, for it was brother against sister now, and there was no telling where it might have ended if Minnie had not fallen in a faint.

"Oh, you've killed her! Bad cess to ye, you've killed her!" groaned the old hag, "but she had her warning, and business can't be stopped for the likes of her."

"How came they here, Mag? What does all this mean?" demanded Ed, fiercely. "Explain, old woman! Explain!"

"Explain nothing!" cried Petey, "for here are the diamonds! Mother Mag, do your work. Look to the girl, Ed—don't let her escape. Of course, she picked your pocket—you know of what—she must have it on her now."

While Ed bent over Minnie, and began feeling about her dress, Petey dragged Captain Porterfield over into one corner of the room, and then seizing George by the heels pulled him over alongside of the unconscious man.

"Let her go, Mag!" he whispered. "If Mamie comes and makes trouble she goes, too—you shall be paid well for this."

"Hold on!" cried Ed. "She hasn't got the diamond. Most likely she has given it to him."

But he spoke too late. Mother Mag, obeying Petey, had touched the secret spring. Instantly a section of the floor dropped beneath those two unconscious forms, and they vanished like a shot.

"Look to the girl!" yelled Petey, springing to the inner room, but too late to stop Minnie.

Nobody saw her rise from the floor, but there she was now climbing out through the window.

"I'm after her!" cried Petey. "Stop her in the hall, Ed! Burn her! I told you not to trust her! It's all up with us if she gains the street!"

What was the matter with the lock? Why wouldn't the key turn? What ill luck struck Petey and made him stumble and measure his

length on the flags in the back yard! Ill luck for the scoundrels it surely was, but it was good luck for Minnie, who ran through the hall and out into the alley in time to run into the arms of Billy Pym; who, with six policemen, was just coming through the green gate.

"Oh, Billy!" she gasped. "Save him! Save him! they are murdering George in Mother Mag's!"

CHAPTER XXIV.—Conclusion.

A sudden turning of the tables had taken place in Mother Mag's den, all owing to Pym's quick action. The detective saw the four men drag Captain Porterfield through the green gate and like the faithful officer he was, dropped his search for George and Minnie, summoned help, and this was the result.

Mother Mag, Four-fingered Ed, Petey and the two sailors were all under arrest now, and the diamonds in the hands of the police, and Billy had descended by the ladder which led down from the trap door into the death vault below.

"They must be there! They must!" cried Minnie, who stood beside the officer looking down. "There is no escape from Mother Mag's vault, but those wretches had no time to go down and knife their victims and throw their bodies into the old sewer, and that's what they meant to do."

"The old sewer at the foot of Oliver street!" cried Billy. "Hello! I've heard of that before. Does this place connect with it? By Heaven, it does! I see the opening! Heaven help the man who goes in through that hole! Phew! see the rats scurry! Wait! I know a trick worth two of this. George isn't dead! Not he! You can't kill that boy! He's trying to escape! Stay here, Moran, and watch! I'm off for the moment. Come, Minnie. I know just what to do!"

The prisoners had gone before them and were now on their way to the Oak street station, and it had all been done so quietly that but few people had collected in front of the green gate, and most of these had followed the prisoners. When Billy Pym and Minnie passed through the gate there was scarcely anyone in sight.

The fall through the trap-door brought George to his senses, and he lost no time in picking himself up and striking a match. There lay the unconscious man at his feet. Was this his father? George thought so, and as he bent down, the eyes opened and the man spoke.

"Come!" he cried. "I can get you out of this. Never mind the rats they won't hurt us. Can you stand? There—lean on me. Now we go! It's only a little way. I am George Porterfield. I want you to tell me your name."

"My name, my name!" gasped the man, in a half dazed way, as supported by George he crawled in through the old sewer. "My name is George Porterfield, too. Can it be that you are my son?"

Before they reached the end of the old sewer where the tide water flowed in, George knew that he was not and never had been Nobody's Son. A few bold strokes would now bring them to safety. George threw off his coat and support-

ed his father while they swam out through the mouth of the sewer.

"Hello! Where in thunder did you fellows come from?" demanded the watchman on the pier, as they stood there all wet and dripping, "and here comes more! What's all this?"

A man and a woman were running down the pier.

"There they are! I told you so!" cried Billy Pym.

"Minnie!"

"George!"

They were locked in each other's arms in an instant.

"But where's the diamond?" demanded Billy.

"Heavens! It was in my coat pocket!" gasped George. "I threw the coat away."

And so it was, and the coat had floated away with the tide, and was never seen more, which statement brings us right up against the end of our story, for the troubles of George Porterfield, Jr., ended with this, the last of the strange happenings of that eventful night.

It was a fine day overhead and an equally fine one under foot, and it was the most memorable day in the life of George Porterfield, Jr., for it was his wedding day. At noon precisely George was married to Minnie Malloy. Billy Pym stood up with him, and Captain Porterfield, recently from China, and as rich as Cæsus, so the papers said, played the part of father to both bride and groom.

George had been declared sole heir to Admiral Porterfield's millions under his grandfather's will, discovered in the treasure-room, and besides he had the business—his business—left to him by Mr. Pixley as a recompense for the wrong done to him in his childhood. And so the mystery of "Nobody's Son" vanished to the sound of wedding bells.

Next week's issue will contain "SHORE LINE SAM, THE YOUNG SOUTHERN ENGINEER; or, RAILROADING IN WAR TIMES."

"My, but Mary is self-important."

"How so?"

"She even thinks the ocean is waving at her."
—Texas Ranger.

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—or—

THE FORTUNE OF TOM WESLEY

By R. T. BENNETT

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XIX.

How Mr. Granger Gave His Consent.

She drank two glasses of the refreshing mineral water and then said:

"Oh, my, Tom, whatever you do, don't sell your shares of this spring. If I owned it I wouldn't part with it at any price."

"Well," said Tom, "if you will take me with it you can have my share as a free gift."

She looked at him in silence for a minute or two and then said:

"Accepted, with many thanks."

"That settles it," said he, and he seated himself by her side again, and they went dashing all around the town, for he was so happy that he forgot the strain to which he was putting his horses.

"Tom," said Evelyn, "you may tell your mother about our engagement, but keep it a secret from all the others in the house, please."

When Tom and Evelyn returned to the cottage Evelyn sprang out of the buggy and ran into the house, while Tom drove around to the stable, as usual, to put up his horses.

Evelyn ran on into the kitchen to see Mrs. Wesley, but she was not there, and only the cook was to be seen; so she went into the dining-room, where she found her; but the dining-room girl was in there, too.

Mrs. Wesley looked at the girl and saw from her face that she was somewhat excited. Evelyn caught her eye and beckoned to her, saying:

"Please come upstairs; I want to tell you something," and with that she ran out of the dining-room and fairly flew up the stairs to her room.

Mrs. Wesley followed her more deliberately, and when she entered Evelyn's room the young girl threw her arms around her neck and said:

"Mother, I've captured Tom. We are engaged, and I am just the happiest girl in all the world."

"Bless you, my daughter," said the widow, kissing her on each cheek. "Of all the girls I know, you are my favorite; but what will your father and mother say about this?"

"Oh, they will be pleased, particularly my father, for he thinks Tom is just the smartest boy alive. Of course, though, we will have to wait two or three years, for Tom is only about nineteen years old; but please say nothing to any one about it. Tom told me that I could tell only you."

When Tom came in from the stable he went up to his room, and Evelyn, hearing his footsteps, came out of her room and met him on the landing of the stairs.

"Tom," said she, "I have told your mother about it."

"What did she say?" he asked.

"Why, she kissed me, and said of all the girls in the world, she preferred me as her daughter."

Then, like two lovers naturally would do, they then and there hugged and kissed each other until they heard some one coming up the stairs, when they parted quickly and hurried to their respective rooms.

Sharp-eyed Julia Echols thought that she noticed something in Evelyn's flushed face, so she proceeded to watch them, and noticed them exchanging glances at the supper table; therefore, when they went to their rooms, Julia followed Evelyn into hers and said:

"Look here, Evelyn, you are not fooling me at all. You and Tom are engaged."

Evelyn turned and looked Julia straight in the face, while Julia shook her finger in her face and said:

"Own up and let me be the first to congratulate you."

"Julia, you won't tell, will you?"

"No, if you would rather that I did not."

"Well, we are engaged, and I am just the happiest girl alive," and then the two friends flew into each other's arms, and, before they separated, Julia was in possession of all the facts, but had promised to keep the secret. However, she kept it only about three days.

It was too great a secret for one girl to keep, so she had to take a few other girls in the house into her confidence, and they each had a confidential friend with whom they shared it.

A couple of weeks later it was known all over the village, and Evelyn never could find out who was responsible for its general circulation, for she had never admitted it to another person; but she accused Julia of telling it.

Julia denied the accusation, and then accused her two confidants of having violated her pledge of secrecy, and they, too, denied it.

After that Tom took Miss Granger out riding behind the bays almost every day in the week.

Mr. Granger came up with his wife and spent the week there, going fishing every day with Tom.

"Look here, Tom, my boy," said Mr. Granger, on the first day they drove out to the old pond, "Evelyn tells me that you and she have agreed to marry on your next birthday."

"Yes, sir, on one condition; that neither you nor her mother object."

"Well, let me tell you that we are not going to object. You have demonstrated that you can take care of a wife; so if she is satisfied with you, we have no right to interfere, for it is her happiness that is concerned and that of nobody else. We want her to be happy above all things, and if she is satisfied, nobody else has the right to be dissatisfied."

Tom was so overjoyed at what Mr. Granger said to him that he was silent for some time.

"Tom," said Mr. Granger, "I came up here to enjoy a week's fishing, so you can make up your mind to go fishing every day in the week, except Sunday. I notice that your mother doesn't want fish more than twice a week on the table, and she is right about it. Fish is something that the average man doesn't want every day. As for myself, I can eat fish for breakfast almost every day in the month."

"All right, sir," said Tom, "I'll go out with you as often as you wish."

CHAPTER XX.

The Story of the Old Indian.

On the morning of the fifth day Evelyn announced that she would go out with them that day herself, as she was tired of staying at home and leaving her father and sweetheart to enjoy the sport.

"All right," said her father, "I see now that we won't bring back so many fish this afternoon as we have been doing."

"What's the matter, father? Do you think that I bring bad luck?"

"No, but Tom won't do so well with his girl alongside of him."

"Well, I'll show you that I will bring more luck to him than the lucky dime ever did, and I'm going to carry that lucky dime in the pocket of my dress, and you'll find that we will have more fish than was had on the day of the fish dinner, where nothing but loaves and fishes were the bill-of-fare."

"All right," laughed Mr. Granger. "If we have such luck as that we will be able to give the whole town a dinner."

She went along with them, and, of course, Tom yielded to her request to be permitted to carry the lucky dime in the pocket of her dress. While they didn't catch as many fish as were consumed at the famous dinner of the loaves and fishes, they did bring home with them a most extraordinary catch, and having the lucky dime in her pocket, Evelyn did catch more than Tom or her father.

"Father," she asked, "how about my bringing bad luck by coming out here to fish with you and Tom?"

"Well, when I said that I didn't calculate upon your having possession of the lucky dime."

When they returned to town after the last day's fishing, Evelyn boasted that she had caught more and larger fish than either her father or Tom. They both claimed that it demonstrated the value of the lucky dime, as she had used it all day. Evelyn called in quite a number of her friends and exhibited the catch.

That evening Mr. Granger returned to the city, and bragged so much about the pleasure of his week's fishing trip that some of his friends had it reported in one of the daily papers, and this caused nearly a score of them to go out to Hadley to try their luck in the old mill-pond.

Nearly every one of the party came to the widow's cottage and begged permission to stop there, but she had no room for more than about half of them, and the others had to stop at the Hadley House. Every one of them, though, begged Tom to let them hold the lucky dime in their pockets; but, of course, he refused, saying that he thought it bad policy to let it get out of his possession, and they were all very much disappointed. Yet they were satisfied with their luck, for the old pond was pretty well stocked with fish of almost every kind.

One of them, though, didn't catch but a very few, and he happened to be an elderly man whom Evelyn had known all of her life. He begged her to get the dime away from Tom just for one day, but she shook her head and said that she thought it would be dangerous.

However, Evelyn went fishing with the elderly gentleman the next day and stood by his side, laying her hand on his head, with about a score of ladies and gentlemen looking on.

Every time he caught a fish the spectators laughed merrily, and there was one young man in the party who was one of Miss Evelyn's admirers. He watched his opportunity when the old gentleman got up from his seat and went to the spring to get a drink of water, and then said:

"Now, Miss Evelyn, just get your fingers in my hair and let me have a chance to catch the biggest fish in the pond."

Evelyn laughingly twisted her fingers in his hair, and he cast his hook out. He was sitting in the same place from which a big eel one day had caused her father to slip on the rock and fall off into the water, and instantly another big eel seized the young man's hook, and a tremendous struggle ensued. The stone was rather a slippery one, and he had scarcely any foothold. He held on to the rod, though, and began slowly slipping into the water.

Evelyn uttered a scream, but held onto his hair. He slipped, lost his balance and fell in the water clear up to his waist, when a couple of gentlemen rushed up, and seizing him by the collar of his coat, held onto him.

Finally he called out to Evelyn:

"For heaven's sake, let go my hair. I can swim."

"Oh, I'll hold onto you," said she, "for good luck."

The young man finally begged the two gentlemen who were assisting Evelyn to take her away, so one of them grabbed her around the waist and the other young man seized the one in the water, as nothing but her grip on his hair kept him from actually going under; but he finally let go the rod and then his hair gave way, and Evelyn retained a handful of it, while the eel escaped with the rod.

Another gentleman then drew up a boat, got into it and rowed out into the pond, chasing the young man's rod. The eel was well hooked, and he had a good time pulling the monster out of the water. The eel was said to be the largest in that pond, and when he landed it in the boat he claimed the credit of catching it.

A comic paper down in the city, a few days later, not only published the story, but also pictured the young man struggling in the water, just over the edge of the shelving rock, with Evelyn Granger holding onto his hair, and he with his mouth wide open, like one screaming for dear life.

Nearly every household in Hadley had that picture cut out to hang up in their rooms, and the picture was certainly the work of an artist, for every one who knew the young man was able to recognize his features plainly, and even Evelyn's, too.

The company who had leased the spring soon built another hotel and quite a number of new cottages, and as fast as they were finished parties took them, some buying them.

One day, while Tom was out hunting, he ran across a land terrapin, and seeing some peculiar marks on his back, he stopped and picked it up to examine it. Somebody had cut with a knife-blade on the shell of the terrapin the words:

(To be continued.)

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, MARCH 9, 1927

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

THE WISE MOTORIST

The wise motorist is the one who obtains full road information before starting on a trip at this season of the year.

CANADA RECIPIENT OF TOURIST MILLIONS

According to estimates made by the Dominion Commissioner of Highways, automobile tourists from the United States spent \$94,000,000 in Canada in 1926.

FAIR MEN AND BRUNETTES STEADIER

According to automobile experts in London, fair men are more careful motor car drivers than dark men, but brunettes are much steadier than blondes at the steering wheel.

SPINSTER PROBLEM IN DENMARK

While France is perplexed by its recurrent problem of decreasing population, Denmark is troubled with the spinster problem. Sociologists are unable to explain why Denmark has a greater proportion of spinsters than any other country in Europe.

An insurance company was recently organized in Copenhagen which issues only one form of insurance—spinster insurance. It sprang into instant popularity and revealed strikingly the large number of women who either had decided to remain spinsters or who were resigned to that fate. The premium for spinster policies is equal to twelve cents a week, which is payable from the age of twenty to sixty. The policy expires when the holder reaches the age of sixty, at which time the company pays the holder a sum of about five dollars a week for life. Payments stop, of course, if the policyholder gets married.

It is interesting to note that there is no bachelor insurance in Denmark.

FRENCH DETECTIVES TRAIL THIEVES TO NEW YORK

Two French detectives, who arrived quietly in New York the other day on the Berengaria, asked the police to aid in recovery of stolen jewels valued at \$1,000,000.

They came here, according to a letter from the French Consul General's office, presented to Chief Inspector John D. Coughlin, to investigate "an important theft of jewels at Biarritz from a Mr. Lowenstein." This Mr. Lowenstein, New York police are certain, is Capt. Alfred Lowenstein, called "the European Croesus," the man whose offer of \$50,000,000 to the Belgian Government last September was rejected.

Details of the million-dollar theft the police refused to divulge, but it was intimated the Frenchmen are on the trail of the thieves who, they say, came to America. The two visitors are Marcel Charpentie, of the mobile police, Public Safety Department of Paris, and Germain Rousselet, an inspector with a Paris insurance organization.

An Associated Press despatch reported Capt. Lowenstein, the Belgian financier, had been robbed in his villa at Biarritz. First reports said the jewelry stolen was valued at \$120,000 in American money.

After the conference in Police Headquarters Inspector Coughlin selected six detectives to assist in the case. French Secret Service men, it is believed, also are in America hunting for the thieves.

LAUGHS

PURELY FEMININE

"How are you coming along with your reducing?"

"I guess I must be one of those poor losers."

—Northwestern Purple Parrot.

AND SLICE IT, PLEASE!

Bride: I want a pound of mince-meat, and please take it from a nice young mince.

—Bucknell Belle Hop.

A CHILLY REJOINDER

"I say, Algernon, why is it that the theatres are so cool in the summer?"

"Egad, Horatius, it must be because of the movie fans."

THE SUPPLY DEPOT

"What do you have for dinner usually?"

"Depends on which delicatessen is open."

—Boston Globe.

THE NEAREST EXIT

Yes, one of the poorest ways to get out of an automobile is through the windshield.

—Boston Globe.

A FRIENDLY TIP

Mistress: I don't want you to have so much company. You have more callers in a day than I have in a week.

Domestic: Well, mum, perhaps if you'd try to be a little more agreeable you'd have as many friends as I have.

QUITE PARDONABLE

Mrs. Highup: I understand that you have forgiven your son for marrying a milliner?

Mrs. Wayup: Yes, she has shown herself willing to support him.

THE BLACK CRUISER

I dropped in at the village tavern one wild, blustering night, just as the old sea captain was beginning one of his yarns.

"Good-evenin', squire," said the old salt, for he always gave me that title, "I was just going to tell of a scrape I got into with a slaver once, in the old days."

"Go on, captain," I said, throwing off my wet coat and drawing a chair up to the fire, "I am all attention."

"Well," proceeded the old fellow, laying down his pipe, "we was bound home from the Cape with a good cargo and was well up on the African coast when this thing happened."

"Merchant ships went well armed in those days, for there was no knowing when we might get into a brush with the free-handed gentry who thought nothing of taking away the whole earnings of a voyage from any honest skipper who came in his way, and then making him walk the plank in payment."

"I was a youngster then, but really as big as I am now, strong as an ox and afraid of nothing, and when I heard the mate say that the Black Cruiser was thought to be hanging around the lower Guinea coast, I reckoned that I wouldn't be sorry to meet him, just to see what sort of a critter he was. This Black Cruiser, as he was called, for no one knew his name, his vessel being as black as a crow's wing, was as much pirate as slaver, and had never been known to let a merchantman across his bows without levying tribute."

"Nobody knew what he was, whether Spaniard, Russian or English, but his men were Turks, Lascars, Malays and that sort mostly, and as fierce a lot of villains as any honest man would want to steer clear of."

"Well, one morning when there was scussly a hatful of wind, the man on lookout up aloft sighted a trim-looking craft, with her lower sails tucked away and all her upper ones set, crossing our bow, a good five miles off."

"He called for a glass, and I ran up the rigging with it and sat on the cross-trees, waiting to see what he'd say, for I knowed he was anxious like, or he'd never called fur a telescope in such a hurry."

"That's him, as sure as preaching," I heard him say. 'Black hull, black masts; wonder he don't carry black sails, and—yes, by gum, and there's the black flag!'

"I could just make out the black flag, and I 'maged there was a skull and bones on it, but when I axed my shipmate he said no."

"That's the Black Cruiser, is it?" I said to him.

"He said it was, and that he'd rather meet old Clootie hisself than that white-faced, black-muzzled pirate."

"I said that I wouldn't, and that I'd like to see him and find out if he was so bad as folks said, and that if he was, then I'd like to take a hand in puttin' a stop to his evil deeds."

"Well, my lad," said the mate, "I reckon you'll have a good chance to see him fast enough, but as for puttin' an end to his crimes, you nor none of us will do that, I reckon."

"Somebody ought to do it," I said.

"Just so, but many has tried and none of 'em

has done it yet. Now you slide down to the skipper and tell him what I said. I reckon he'll get out of the Cruiser's way as fast as sails can carry us."

"I hurried down on deck and told the old man what the Jack had said, but instead of cutting away he turns around and orders up more sail."

"Then he says to the mate to open the magazine and give each man a dozen rounds, besides cutlasses and small arms, and for us all to get ready for the biggest fight we ever had seen."

"The varmint made me run once," he said, "but now it's my trick. I've got a bigger crew and more guns than I had then, and if I can sweep this black-hearted and black-bearded renegade off the face of the seas, I'll do it."

"That was the sort o' talk I liked, and there was more than one of the same mind, and we give a cheer that I reckon the slaver captain heard five miles away."

"We crowded on all the sail that the light wind would take, and hurried after the pirate; but he didn't seem to wanten have anything to say to us that day, and put on a little more sail himself."

"He's probably got two or three hundred poor black fellers down in his hold, and expects to get a hundred dollars apiece for 'em in Cuba," the old man said, "and when he ran up that black flag, he only done it to scare us off, but I'll take the niggers away from him and hang him, too, if I go to Davy Jones for it to-morrow."

"We cut ahead as fast as we could go, and fetched upon the black scoundrel quite a bit, till at last along in the afternoon, when we were within a couple of miles or maybe less, the wind began to go down."

"The Cruiser was lighter in build than our vessel, and could get along on less wind, and now he began to pull away from us."

"The skipper, he looked at the sky and the glass, and then he says to get ready all the boats, for he knew the wind would not last much longer, and that he meant to overhaul the black fiend anyhow."

"The boats were made ready, half a dozen of 'em, and we all stood waiting for orders, wishing either for a deal calm or a gale o' wind, we didn't mind which."

"We got the calm, and we got it sooner than we expected, the sails flapping idly from the spars and the sea as smooth as glass."

"Then the skipper ordered the boats down and we all got in, or as many as could, leaving just enough men to man the ship in case the wind came up again."

"The Black Cruiser lay like a log on the water, her sails hanging loose, and not a sign of anybody could we see on deck or anywhere, though they must have known that we were coming."

"As we got nearer we expected that they would open fire on us and the boats kept pretty well apart, so as not to present too solid a mark for the gunners."

"They never showed themselves and they never fired a gun, and it was as though they were all dead or asleep."

"We're going to board that ship and free those niggers, plague or no plague," said the skipper. "I don't believe she's a pest ship; things are too neat about her, and I'm going on."

"Then there was another thing that sort of gave us the creeps, and that was the sharks."

"We hadn't seen any for days, and now, all of a sudden, we see 'em all around us, one here, one there, and over there three or four together, their sharp fins sticking up above the glassy water like knives.

"Sharks always come where there's death going to happen, they say, and I must own that it made me nervous to see so many of 'em and see 'em all heading for the same place—that black hull on the water.

"We got within a mile of the ship when we saw a splash in the water alongside the Black Cruiser, and then saw a half dozen sharks shoot forward.

"'They're throwing the poor fellows overboard,' said the skipper. 'That's like the wretches. Pull ahead, boys! We may not save all the blacks, but we'll avenge them.'

"We pulled ahead, every man of us doing his best, though it was like working in an oven, but before we had gone many lengths we saw more splashes in the water, and saw the sharks rush for their prey.

"'Pull ahead, my bullies, this calm can't last long, and if I'm not mistaken we're going to get a slant of wind that'll send the old ship humming. Pull away, my lads!'

"We did pull ahead, but there were more splashes and we could see the sharks almost leaping out of the water to catch the poor wretches as they fell.

"We rushed on, all of us, and pretty soon, as we got within a dozen or twenty lengths, a shot came whistling over the water and fell into the sea just beyond the last boat.

"The fellow had aimed too high, but in another moment there came a second puff, and a second shot struck the water between the last two boats and sent the spray dashing over the men.

"The boats changed their course, and not too soon, either, for a third shot struck just where they would have been if they had kept straight on.

"The skipper signaled to the other boats, and they all changed their courses, running in zigzags and bothering the gunners on board the Black Cruiser.

"We began to feel the breeze pretty lively as our boat and another ran alongside on the port quarter, and leaving one man in each boat, our crew swarmed up the sides, our cutlasses between our teeth and our pistols ready for use.

"A good dozen of us swarmed upon the rail all at once and opened fire, the others following in short order.

"A lot of turbaned Turks were just coming up from below, with their cruel-looking crooked swords in their hands, and, yelling to them in a deep voice, was the Black Cruiser himself, an evil look on his white face and a savage glare in his deep black eyes.

"The men rushed at us, swords in hands, and some shots were fired, but we returned them, and then with a cheer we leaped on deck.

"At the same time more of us came over on the other side, and both gangs of us closed in on the Turks and Malays, and the fight became hot.

"The Black Cruiser was shouting and calling to his men to kill us, but many of them were stupid from drink or the fever, I could not tell which, and seemed slow to obey.

"Before long we had all our men on the slaver's decks, and the hottest kind of a fight was going on.

"No mercy was given or asked, and our men took their lives in their hands and fought like tigers, knowing they must kill or be killed.

"There were more of the slavers than there was of us, but we had right on our side, and we knew that we were in the tiger's den and that we must fight for our lives.

"At the time I didn't know what I did; all I knew was that I was in the midst of flame and smoke, and noise and confusion, and scarcely knew what I was doing except that I must fight and keep on fighting till I dropped.

"Man after man fell, but where one of our gallant lads was cut down, two of the slavers paid for his life, and quickly, too, so that soon the wretches grew more cautious and drew back around the foremast for a rally.

"The Black Cruiser himself, looking like a fiend and seeming to bear a charmed life, for not a bullet had touched him, not a sword has as much as even scratched him, stood in front of his men exposed to our fire, but smiling as if he knew that no one could kill him, and that he would win the fight yet.

"Up to this time we had not noticed that the breeze had greatly increased and that we were flying through the water, but now we saw it, and some of us looked across to where we had left our own vessel.

"She was coming on under all sail, and we knew that if the wind increased she would soon overhaul and pass us, for she sailed best in a gale of wind.

"One of us whistled, for even at such a time a man will sometimes think of the strangest things.

"'Mates,' I said to those nearest me, 'if one of us can go below and free those poor blacks, they will fight on our side, and we will gain the day.'

"'Yes, but who dare do it?' asked one. 'It'll be as much as his life is worth. They will take him for an enemy and beat his brains out with their chains.'

"'I'll do it myself; I am not afraid,' I said.

"But they would not let me, and just then the Black Cruiser gave the order to charge, and the whole horde rushed at us.

"We dashed at them, meaning to meet them half-way; but all of a sudden there was a roar, and a swarm of blacks rushed up from the hold and stood between us and the slavers.

"They kept on coming up by dozens, till there must have been two or three hundred of 'em on deck, all looking as fierce as famished wolves.

"How they escaped I don't know, but somebody said that the steward of the slaver had gone down himself and unlocked their shackles, having a grudge against the Black Cruiser for a blow or a hard word, or an insult of some kind, given to him months before, but never forgotten.

"I can't tell what followed; it is too horrible; but the cries of agony all lingered in my memory for years.

"The blacks had avenged the murder of their comrades, and the Black Cruiser and all his men perished, not one of them being left alive to tell the tale."

PLUCK AND LUCK

CURRENT NEWS

DOCTORS OF THE AIR

The continent of Australia has been divided into circular districts each with a radius of 200 miles to be covered by flying doctors. In this way a physician in Government employ may be summoned to any place in the whole country where he may be needed and reach there in a comparatively short time.

LONG HAIR AND SKIRTS PREDICTED

The Eton crop will last perhaps for another two years, but M. Emile hair dressing expert, believes a reversion to long hair will certainly come with in the next three.

Lecturing before a group of hairdressers, he expressed the opinion that a return to long hair would bring longer skirts, basing his argument on the theory that women's hair dressing styles run in cycles, and short hair periods generally average about ten years.

SUPPLANT DERBIES WITH GRASS HATS

Hat designers who are worried over the conservatism of men's head-gear will make an effort next spring to supplant derbies with grass hats. They will be made of tough East Indian grass and will resemble a soft felt hat in appearance. They will be offered in nine shades of brown and gray and guaranteed not to fade or sunburn.

INCREASED USE OF BRICK

Statistics for 1926, completed by the New York District Common Brick Association indicate that the consumption of common clay burnt brick reached the astounding total of 1,314,000,000 brick, of which well over a billion came from the Hudson River district.

Contracts awarded during 1926 totals, according to the F. W. Dodge Corporation, \$109,482,800, or about ten per cent over 1925, and the increased use of brick was approximately twenty-five per cent. The increase is accounted for, in part by the greater use of brick for residences. It is estimated that in Brooklyn alone one family brick dwellings gained thirty-five per cent, and multi-family houses twenty-three per cent. The same authority states that the average cost of brick dwellings decreased seven per cent in 1926 from costs of the previous year.

AN AMATEUR RADIO SET TO RECEIVE GOSSIP

Buford Young, a farmer near Temple, Texas, announced he had found a way to tune a crude amateur radio set in on all neighborhood gossip within a half a mile.

He came to town to consult with radio experts. He said he wondered if there wasn't a law prohibiting the keeping of such an instrument about the house.

Young's description of the results obtained from his radio set puts it away ahead of the rural

party line telephone for tuning in on neighborhood conversations.

Some days ago, Young related, he attempted to make a three-tube outfit. He got the coil wound wrong and could pick up no station. Tinkering further he was amazed to hear his loud speaker report that "Will Broach's mule is out."

The voice was recognized as that of Allen Warren, who lives half a mile from Young.

Young and friends continued to listen in on the Warren home. Soon the children came from school and said some more wood was going to be needed at the school soon. Young then drove to Warren's and verified the conversations, he said.

Radio fans of the neighborhood called in to study the mystery decided that the explanation might be a wire or counterpoise running under Young's aerial because, by moving this, they could pick up voices from telephone lines without touching the telephone wires.

The wire then was turned toward the homes of G. W. Young and Joe Archer and conversations were heard distinctly. It was found that voices could be heard when spoken in a closed room, but that the phenomenon failed in open air.

While Young continues his experiments his neighbors are censoring their conversations.

A DOG'S DEVOTION TO HIS MASTER

A striking example of the devotion of a dog came to light some time ago in the narrative of an old homesteader in northern Wyoming. A few years ago the old homesteader was a sheepherder in the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains, several miles from any human habitation. Although the snow was deep, the herder and his dog drove the sheep to the surrounding hills, where they would dig the snow with their hoofs until they found grass.

One afternoon on their way back to camp the herder suddenly disappeared from sight. He had walked into the hole made by an old prospector. As he felt himself sinking into the earth the herder concluded he was face to face with death.

Fortunately the shaft was only ten feet deep. The man decided he could dig himself out with his knife. After several hours of fruitless effort he sank exhausted on the pile of dirt which he had dug. All the time he could hear the barking and the scraping of his dog. Eventually he fell asleep from exhaustion. In the morning he discovered, by the sound of the dog's barking, that he could not be very far underground. Making a mound of the earth which he had already dug away, he mounted this, and found he was able to get a handhold on the rim of the shaft. In a few more minutes he had lifted himself out of his prison, and then he discovered that the dog, all during the night, had dug down to a sufficient depth to allow his master to grasp the ground at this point with his hands.

The dog's feet were bleeding, and he had worn his nails into the toes by his long night's work. Moreover, he had kept an eye on the sheep, which were herded near the spot.

TIMELY TOPICS

GAS EXCELS IN QUALITY

As a result of a survey being conducted by the chemists of the United States Bureau of Mines, the average motor gasoline marketed in the United States this past year has excelled in quality that sampled in any of the previous years.

FIREPROOF FLOORS TO BE USED

Non-inflammable first floors in residences will soon be in common use, says G. E. Warren of the Portland Cement Association. Fire insurance records, he says, show that seven out of ten fires of internal origin start in basements. A firesafe first floor confines the blaze and limits the damage.

Fireproof floors have been in use in the best hotels for years and they have proved to be as practicable as common residence floors. This Mr. Warren says, disposes of the fear that concrete floors would be cold and undesirable.

AUTO INDUSTRY NOW LEADS IN LABOR SAVINGS

The automobile industry, showing an output three times as great in 1925 as it was in 1914, is cited in the monthly labor statement just published by the Department of Labor as proof of the marked degree which labor productivity has increased in certain industries during the past decade. In the iron and steel industry during the same period it had increased 50 per cent., and in the boot and shoe industry approximately 17 per cent., while on a 1917 base the output per man in the paper and pulp industry had increased 34 per cent.

ANCIENT CITIES TO BE EXCAVATED BY ITALY

Along with the announcement that the Italian Government is considering renewal of the attempt to excavate the Roman City of Herculaneum, which was destroyed in A. D. 79 by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, various other plans for adding to Italy's archeological treasures were announced.

Other points being considered for renewed excavations are Capri, where the ruins of the palace of the Roman Emperor Tiberius are; ancient Cumae, where the oldest Greek colony in Italy once stood, and more extensive excavations at the ruins of Pompeii, sister city of Herculaneum, which was buried under the same lava flow.

INSURES OWNERS AGAINST LOSS OF USE OF CAR

A new form of automobile insurance which compensates the owner of a Stutz or Gardner car in the even of the theft of his car has recently been developed. Under this policy an indemnity of \$5 per day (up to thirty days) is paid for every day or fraction thereof that the owner is deprived of the use of his car as the result of theft.

The insurance is sold only to the automobile manufacturer and not to individuals. Every purchaser of a new car after the adoption by the manufacturer of Loss-of-Use insurance is given gratis a policy protecting him for a year.

WIT GETS SMALL BOY A JOB

Henry J. Steen, ten, a page in the Texas Legislature, knows how to get what he wants and gets it.

Wearing a collar too large because he has trouble to find one small enough, but with the mien of a future statesman, the lad applied for the position.

A House Committee told him he was too small, that his legs were not long enough.

"Gentlemen," he replied with aplomb, "What the Legislature needs is brains, not legs."

He immediately got the job and has been working several days.

HARD ROADS AID AUTO INDUSTRY

The automobile industry has been practically revolutionized during the past five years. It seems incredible, yet it is actually true. Stewart MacDonald, president of the Moon Motor Car Company, states that in the past five years there has been over three billion dollars expended in the construction of hard roads over the United States.

High speeds with relatively small engines are the rule instead of the exception, but most important of all has been the tendency to lower wheels, bigger tires with lower air pressures, and fourwheel brakes.

In other words, automobiles are now constructed to take advantage of the hard roads, quick acceleration, safe and non-skidding stopping, and low centre of gravity, which means safety at high speeds.

NEW USE FOR CAR

"Of the many uses to which automobiles have been put," says C. A. Schumacher, manager of the J. E. French Company, local Dodge Brothers distributors, "none is more interesting than the use made by Ferdinand Burgdorff, the well-known painter and etcher, of his Dodge Brothers coupe.

"A veritable studio has Burgdorff made of his car—a studio that takes him to the rugged shores of Monterey to paint the Monterey cypress for which he is so well known, or to Arizona or New Mexico, where he paints his favorite desert scenes. Long drives and hard drives are often necessary to reach nature's choicest beauty spots—which he is constantly seeking out—and, sunshine or storm, Burgdorff goes and paints when the scene is at its best and when the mood is strong within him.

"Burgdorff tells us that one of the finest things about the new coupe—this is his third Dodge—is the remarkably generous range of vision. He actually does most of his field work sitting in the car.

"Uncle Sam used Dodge Brothers cars with the American Expeditionary Force—and still uses them. Roy Chapman Andrews depended on them for his three expeditions into the inner fastness of the Mongolian desert in search of the beginning of man, and now this California artist finds one indispensable to carry him safely and surely and provide him with a workshop wherever he goes."

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